LISTENING FOR SOUNDS OF STRIVING:

MAXINE GREENE AND STORIES OF MUSIC TEACHER BECOMINGS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Teachers College, Columbia University

2021

Abstract

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This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of three music teachers who are invited to view themselves and their practices as "becoming" in the context of Maxine Greene's philosophy of education. In communion with my own becoming as teacher and researcher, I explore the aspects of my participants' musical and teaching identities over the course of their careers and in relation to their unique teaching contexts. Throughout this project, I explored qualities of resonance, striving, a sense of artistic "re-capturing," wide-awakeness, social imagination, and courage. I came to understand that stories play an important role in shaping our perceptions of reality and awareness of the lived lives of the "other" as we strive together toward a more just society through artistic encounters in education.

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DEDICATION

For my family, friends, students, and teachers:
Thank you for believing in me.

And for Maxine:
You are a light in dark times.

Chapter I

FREQUENCIES OF WHICH I WAS UNAWARE

It began with a curiosity. A presence felt in the creaky, historic hallways of Teachers College when I first arrived. A name spoken with reverence; memories recounted with fondness. A female philosopher—I hadn't encountered many of those. A devotee of education and the arts. A teacher of my teachers and a heroine to my own academic heroes. A 93-year-old social activist whose wheelchair was all that stood between her and being a part of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests. A legend who had once walked the same hallways as I do now.

Though I'd often heard her name spoken with deference during my first year as a doctoral student at Teachers College, it wasn't until I took a philosophy of music education course midway through my degree that I'd first read the words of Maxine Greene. "I still wonder at how unaware I was of so many frequencies," she muses, in the title of one of her Lincoln Center addresses (Greene, 2000, p. 192). Greene speaks directly and pointedly to her audience in this text using the second person "you," then stops to recount her own thoughts with "I," and finally draws us together with "we" as she remembers a musical performance that challenged her own understandings of sound. Here I traveled on my first journey of meaning with Maxine through my own musical past, stopping to reconsider a memory from my undergraduate years: a brass quintet rehearsal, held late one evening long after faculty members had left, a large hall filled with music majors faithfully practicing for lessons, juries, recitals, and concerts. We warmed up and tuned to our customary "concert F," building up from tuba to trumpet. Designated as "group leader," I stopped the tubist this evening and asked, "Why are you playing a Bb? We usually tune to the F." The ensemble members looked at me quizzically as the tuba

player re-articulated the opening pitch: “This *is* an F,” he said. I joined in with my trumpet but remained confused by what I heard as each member played what sounded like different notes: some Bbs, Fs, and a few Ds. I stopped again, listening and puzzling over what I was hearing.

I’d known what overtones were, conceptually, and remembered music teachers talking about hearing them, but until this point they were just “magic” to me—like those whistles that only dogs can hear. Until this moment, I had been literally unaware of these frequencies in my experience of sound as a trumpet player. As each member of the quintet dropped out until only the tuba’s warm, enveloping tone remained, filling both the room and my consciousness, I heard the old, familiar concert F again. But this time I also heard the Bb above it, and another F above that, and another Bb, and even higher, a D. I could still hear the F, but now there were so many other notes all together, all at once. I found that if I consciously paid attention to one of them, it became louder than the others, and if I shifted focus to another note, this new note then became the loudest—like those optical illusions that let you see two different images on account of positive and negative space: it’s a vase—no wait, it’s two faces looking at one another.

And once I began to hear these sounds, I couldn’t *unhear* them. I could choose to focus my attention in a particular direction, I could attempt to ignore one in favor of another, but they were all still present in my auditory perception: a concert F now was not the same now as it had been to my consciousness before. I recalled this evening rehearsal again later in the philosophy course when we read Greene’s “Wide Awakeness and the Moral Life,” a carefully argued exposition of Alfred Schütz’s concept of “wide-awakeness” that Greene drew upon and developed in this text (later published in *Landscapes of Learning)*. I remember returning excitedly to class for a night of discussion over the article and of wide-awakeness—a call to stay “woke” before it was trendy, a new Plato’s Cave—and I thought about how I had “woken up”

that night as an undergraduate trumpet player to the musical frequencies that had always been present yet all the while unknown to my consciousness. And I wondered what other sounds I had yet to hear.

Through this brief introduction to Greene's ideas and my own exposure to the concept of wide-awakeness that stemmed from my (literal) experience with becoming aware of frequencies that had formerly been absent from my perception, I became curious. I wanted to continue thinking about wide-awakeness as a metaphor for the kinds of deep learning I strove to foster in my classes as a teacher. I wanted to know more about what this celebrated female philosopher thought about education, about art, about music. I wondered what her ideas might mean for music education on a systemic level in the United States. I also had to figure out what to write a dissertation about. So here I am.

Related Literature

A number of dissertations have been published toward the exposition of Maxine Greene's work in a variety of capacities related to education, philosophy, curriculum, and aesthetics; through these works and their authors I began to understand how far the tendrils of Greene's ideas reached into a variety of disciplines; these dissertations illustrate the plurality of ends which Greene's influence has continued to extend. Through the intimacy of her tone, her attention of small spaces, and her familiar narrations of personal connections to philosophical ideas, Greene has the power to make her reader feel as though they were being spoken to directly, as if a close, personal acquaintance had already been made; I have experienced this for myself and in the writings of others of their own encounters with Greene. Yet in working toward my own contributions to the scholarship centered around Maxine Greene throughout this

dissertation, I acknowledge that my study stands firmly on the shoulders of those whose fascination with and love for Maxine Greene and her writing far precedes my own.

Most of the dissertations on Greene's work are centered around particular disciplines: English education (Miller, 1977; Pinède, 2003), curriculum studies (Miller, 1977), visual arts (Heck, 1991), teacher education (Crawford, 1987; Dixon, 1994; Miller, 1977; Neider, 2016; Parr, 1996), feminist pedagogy (Jacobs, 1991), music education (Parr 1996), religious education (Kim, 2005), educational technology (Linaberger, 2007), and arts education at large (Stepniak, 2006). Several of these studies present historical, biographical portrayals of Greene (Dixon, 1994); Powers, 2012), while others emphasize concepts of "narrative" and autoethnographic study (Neider, 2016; Powers, 2012; Topol, 2002).

Many of these dissertations provide deep, textual analyses of Greene's philosophical work centered around particular ideas: Crawford (1987) examines advocacy arguments for the inclusion of arts education both in public schools and teacher education programs; Powers (2012) serves as a philosophical exegesis of Greene's concept of "lived life" in her major published writings; Grey (2008) centers around aesthetics, imagination, and freedom in Greene's later works; Parr (1996) examines the concepts of democracy, aesthetics, formal education, and offers an interpretive application of such in music education; Heck (1991) explores the processes of art making as a metaphor for teaching and learning in light of Greene's "Artistic-Aesthetic Considerations" in *Landscapes of Learning*; Pinède (2003) analyzes Greene's concept of "moral imagination" in relation to the study of literature in school settings; Jacobs (1991) serves as a feminist text-analysis of the discourses in Greene's major works through Greene's characterization of herself as "ambivalent daughter."

While the majority of these dissertations employ philosophical and historical research methodologies centered around in-depth, textual analyses of Greene's work, Stepniak (2006) adopts an ethnographic approach to a study centered around the perceptions and experiences of practicing arts teachers. Like Stepniak, I am endeavoring here to contribute to the body of passionate and purposeful scholarship around Maxine Greene's work through an ethnographic perspective. I believe that practicing teachers, like the art teachers in Stepniak's ethnography, have important perspectives to share, that they deserve a seat at the table of educational philosophy and the "doing" of such.

Like Neider (2016), I am interested in the concept of "becoming," and the lived experiences of practicing teachers who are invited to view themselves as such. Like Parr (1996), I wonder about the application of Greene's philosophical work specifically in music education, the context of my own teaching and becoming, which, like Powers (2012) are narratively woven throughout this study. Most importantly, like Stepniak (2006), I am interested in individual teachers, themselves: in small spaces, in individual contexts, in seeing "big," as Greene would say. It is at the intersection of these topics—of doing philosophy, of becoming, and of passionate music educators who are dedicated to their *own* becomings—that I endeavor to contribute something new and of value to the passionate work of those whose fascination with Greene has also sparked my own.

Theoretical Framework

While I have striven to read and understand each of Greene's major works and essays throughout my own study of her life and ideas, this dissertation focuses primarily upon the two texts through which she develops her philosophies of education and aesthetics: *Landscapes of*

Learning (1978) and *Releasing the Imagination* (1995). From my own vantage point, *Landscapes of Learning* reads more like a traditional philosophy text: it is divided into four topical sections that speak to her philosophy's epistemological and educational concerns, views on social policy, aesthetics, and feminisms (all of which are exceedingly interesting to me, the first and third of which are most relevant to this particular study). Greene presents her ideas and arguments for each of these topics in a fairly sequential order and draws often upon works of literature—an avid reader—to enlarge her philosophical ideas. Written nearly 20 years later, *Releasing the Imagination* is a sophisticated weaving together of Greene's philosophical ideas through literature, art, and personal experiences. While Greene infuses bits of such throughout her earlier work to support her ideas, *Releasing the Imagination* more fully embodies her philosophy of aesthetics as being provocative of creative thinkings and doings; Greene's philosophical ideas are portrayed in this text as the direct product of her own engagement in the arts and literature. Slattery and Dees (1998) view this final, major work as an "autobiographical narrative" and Greene's "artistic representation of her journey to create a new social and educational vision" (p. 47).

On "Doing Philosophy"

As someone who now strives to prepare and inspire future music teachers at the university level, I know that *teaching about teaching* is difficult; it requires a great deal of attention to be paid toward consistency of method and message. In other words, if I spend a class period lecturing my students about the value of constructivist teaching practices, I am not only inconsistent in my own teaching but likely uninspiring toward my students' valuation of such. I believe that Greene's portrayal of her aesthetic philosophy in *Releasing the Imagination* demonstrates a great deal of care taken not only to avoid this kind of hypocrisy but also to show

her readers in a rich and personal way how her own engagement in the arts helped release her own philosophical imagination. In the words of Randall Allsup—my dissertation advisor and someone who knew Maxine well: "Greene's writing isn't just *about* aesthetics, it *is* aesthetics."

William Ayers (1998) recounts his first encounter with Greene as a graduate student enrolled in her introduction to philosophy class at Teachers College: "What might it mean," Ayers remembers Greene asking on the first day of class, "to pose distinctive kinds of questions with respect to our own practice and our own lived situations?" as opposed to "analyzing positions or searching exclusively for clarifying language" (p. 4). Greene's own question posed here alludes to the kinds of thinking she sees as valuable and worth engaging in: the kind of thinking that also involves a "doing" and a connection to everyday life. "Doing philosophy," for Greene, requires that we "respond to actual problems and real interests, to the requirements of sense-making in a confusing world" (Greene, 1978, p. 165). To do philosophy is to be intimately connected with our daily lives and the various contexts we move through. To consciously engage in philosophical thinking is to recognize deficits in our own societies and direct our consciousness toward reparation of these deficiencies.

Similarly, French philosopher Pierre Hadot (1995) looks to the Ancient Greek philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism to argue for a conception of philosophy as a *way of life*. Although philosophy as an academic discipline is typically perceived in the modern world as being abstract, esoteric, and unconnected to our day-to-day lives and decision-making, both Hadot and Greene see philosophy as a valuable tool—a way of thinking, being, and figuring out how to live well. The process of philosophical engagement as a way of life, for Hadot, involves both the acquisition of theoretical understandings and application of these principles to our daily lives. Just as a notated musical score is not "the music," itself (but a representation of such),

principles and theories are not philosophy for Hadot and Greene; music are philosophy are about the "doing," forming, and questioning of lived experience together. While the study of philosophy in modern times typically ends with the former, Hadot stresses the importance of allowing ourselves to be changed by our philosophical thinking in concrete, day-to-day ways. For both Greene and Hadot, philosophy requires both a rigorous intellectual engagement, a commitment to allowing our consciousnesses to expand to new ways of knowing and being in the world, and an effort toward creating new meanings for ourselves on account of new understandings.

Slattery and Dees (1998) acknowledge the perspective of the "positivist critics" whom they suppose will inevitably dislike Greene's portrayal of her philosophy in *Releasing the Imagination* on account of its deviation from traditional European analytical philosophy; her use of literature was viewed by some as functioning to distract the reader from the "rigorous logic of philosophical analysis" (p. 47). Greene herself attests to having been patronized as a young, female college professor, being told she was "too literary to do philosophy" (Greene, 1995, p. 113), and was thought of by some as being "somewhat quaint" and "soft in her thinking" (Ayers, 1998, p. 9). Yet it is this type of detached philosophizing—"thinking small"—that Greene vehemently rejects (Slattery & Dees, 1998, p. 47). Through her own experience of being socially barred from the practice of philosophy on account of her use of English literature (and also on account of her being a woman), Greene urges teachers to engage in their own philosophical questions—"to tap into their own stories, their experiences in finding projects by which to create their identities"—and think deeply about their teaching (Greene, 1995, p. 113). Thus, "doing philosophy" is not a task to be left to "philosophers," educationalists, curriculum designers,

school administrators, etc. Rather, Greene urges teachers to engage in philosophical pursuits in their own contexts and with their own students (Miller, 2010, page 126).

In part, this dissertation is a study of philosophy in that it is a deep examination of the particular philosophical ideas and person of Maxine Greene as they relate to art, education, and consciousness. It was, after all, a fascination with Maxine Greene and her legendary presence as a thinker at Teachers College that brought me to this place of writing and contemplation. Yet, I do not think Greene would actually have approved of a dissertation that centered wholly around an analysis of her ideas in the way of classic, Western, analytical philosophy. For Greene, philosophy is inextricably linked with *doing*, just as much as it was with studying; philosophy is directly connected to individuals: to our uniquely perceived consciousnesses of reality, to our own situations and contexts, to our own journeys and "becomings." Thus, my dissertation is about *doing* philosophy—or, at least, it is about my own striving toward such in light of Greene's work. Throughout this text, I aim to embody this spirit and *process* of philosophy: to understand and actively engage in Greene's philosophical ideas, to exercise interpretations of such in my own perceptual contexts, and to reflexively attend to my own becoming as it is situated in contexts of my participants.

On "Becoming"

This dissertation is also about "becoming": my becoming as a musician and teacher, my music teacher participants' becomings, and a bits of others' becoming stories who have inspired me—re-captured me—along this journey of writing a dissertation and getting to know Maxine Greene. I begin with the autobiography of a woman whose stories I happened to be reading around the time I also became interested in Greene for my dissertation work: an unintentional, side-by-side pairing of becomings that proved to be one of those times (as is often the case when

one is in the midst of "eating, sleeping, and breathing grad school") where ideas from seemingly disparate places collided and connected in for me in a completely unexpected way.

I'm not sure if Michelle Obama has ever heard of Maxine Greene or read any of her work (Greene would have obviously known of Obama, although she passed away two years into Barrack's 2nd presidential term), but I am convinced the two women would have enjoyed a sunny afternoon stroll together through Central Park. Throughout the text, Obama narrates her own becoming—an ambitious, driven child who grew up on the South Side of Chicago, a young lawyer and newlywed, an activist and First Lady of the United States of America—recalling the various identities she has held and the extent to which even her young, hardworking childhood self could never have imagined these events. "I think it's one of the most useless questions an adult can ask a child—What do you want to be when you grow up? As if growing up is finite. As if at some point you become something and that's the end" (Obama, 2018, p. ix).

Like Obama's, Greene's work gestures toward a conception of the self that is continually "becoming." While a number of psychologists have made theoretical contributions to concept of "identity" (e.g., Côté & Levine, 2016; Erikson, 1956; Marcia, 2009;), much of the field's focus emphasizes individualistic, autonomous conceptions of such and seeks answers to the question, "Who am I?" In looking at identity through the philosophical concept of becoming, Greene implores us to move beyond the seductiveness of labels, categories, and identifying ourselves through such another way of consciously moving throughout our lives:

> It is always tempting to identify oneself as what one has been or done in the past . . . to become a 'me.' "The alternative is continually to create and recreate the self through the agency of the 'I.' To do this requires a considerable ability to look reflectively and critically at the 'me,' . . . it requires as well an ability to recognize openings in one's life situations . . . that allow one to go beyond what one has been. (Greene, 1978, p. 36)

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call this process *becoming-other*: thinking of ourselves according to our reachings and our strivings rather than according to a set of definitions, categories, accomplishments, and past choices, which Greene refers to as becoming "a me." Thus, the present consists of not "what we are, but rather, what we become, what we are in the process of becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 112). The authors often draw on literary examples to illustrate the concept of becoming, as Greene also did: Deleuze and Guattari argue that the purpose of novels—and the primary appeal in reading them—is not its generation of nostalgia, fantasy, or characters and settings that we "like," but that novels are rather worth reading on account of their character development: "the perpetual states and affective transitions of the lived" in which "the artist is a seer, a becomer" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 171). Change and development are inherently part of what it means to be conscious for humans, although Greene suggests that the degree to which we are able to become is dependent upon our willingness to do so.

As I recalled some of the stages of my own becoming alongside my reading of Obama's autobiography, I considered the various identities I'd held as a child and young adult, some come and gone, others persistent—daughter, sister, trumpet player, "hard-working-straight-A-student,"—and the importance I'd placed on these. I thought about the extent to which I'd believed I had "figured myself out" as the "ever-so-mature" high school student and young adult that I thought I was at the time. I also thought about some of the ways my own identity has shifted over the years and how unforeseen events—a shift from music "performer" to "teacher," a decision to live and teach in Korea for six years, a desire to pursue doctoral studies—have allowed me to become someone I could never have predicted nor striven for as a young child. As I continued to turn the pages of Michelle Obama's story, I thought, *this is what Greene was*

talking about. "For me, becoming isn't about arriving somewhere or achieving a certain aim," Obama writes, but rather it is a "forward motion, a means of evolving, a way to reach continuously toward a better self. The journey doesn't end" (p. 419).

Yet while the concept of "becoming," is centered around words like "changing," "growing," "developing," and "working" toward completion, Greene clarifies that "to become different, of course, is not simply to will oneself to change. There is the question of being able to accomplish what one *chooses* to do" (Greene, 1988, p. 3). Dewey adds that we are free "not because of what we statically are, but in so far as we are becoming different from what we have been" (1928/1960, p. 280). Thus, "becoming" involves consciously changing and developing *according* to our consciously-chosen purposes.

Obama characterizes becoming as "reach[ing] continuously toward a better self" (p. 419), a view which Paulo Freire suggests is predicated by a conscious acknowledgement of our incompleteness: "People know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompletion" (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 84). To become is to consciously acknowledge and accept our own incompleteness—the incompleteness of our consciousness of reality—to know and accept that there is much we don't know. This "unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality" is what propels our becoming (p. 84). Thus, becoming can never be a passive endeavor that simply encompasses the ways in which one changes over the course of a lifetime: it is a striving toward the ends of one's choosing, a reaching for completeness.

In acknowledging the incompleteness of our own consciousnesses and reaching toward the unknown, Greene urges that we concern ourselves with those ends that involve intelligent and humane choosings (Greene, 1988, p. 3); we must view the consciousnesses and perspectives

of others' realities worth striving to understand. Becoming is not so much a matter of continually changing from one thing to the next, but an *enlarging* our consciousnesses of reality: complexifying our understandings of the world and allowing for our own perspectives to include those of others. "This means that 'reality,' rather than being fixed and pre-defined" becomes increasingly complex, "as more perspectives are taken, more texts are opened, more friendships are made" (Greene, 1988, p. 23). Freire offers that conversely, people who do not see themselves as becoming "cannot have a future to be built in unity with others" (Freire, 1970, p. 183). Becoming involves a striving toward knowing and empathizing with others; becoming is intimately related to the ways we are conscious of those outside of our own consciousnesses.

The philosophical concept of "becoming" also bears similarities to the posthumanist re-conceptualization of *Bildung*, as explored by Taylor (2017). Although it has no direct translation to English, *Bildung* is a German word that symbolizes a complex notion of education that is centered around self-formation, growth, and human flourishing: *bildung* represents "the holistic development of the individual, as well as about broader hopes for a better society" (Horlacher, 2004, p. 409). *Bildung,* as it is traditionally understood, however, has strong ties to humanist, Enlightenment Era beliefs and assumptions, namely the view of humans as autonomous beings with the ability to reason (a faculty that is wholly separate from emotions and bodily impulses), the idea that truth can be objectively known through correct learning, and the view that education serves as a forum for humans to better themselves through learning, growing, and contributing to the progress of society (Taylor, 2017).

While problematizing the concept of *Bildung* on account of its historical privileging of certain ways of knowing—namely rationality— as "objective" and marginalizing those deemed as less rational, Taylor (2017) advocates for a re-imagining of the term with postmodern,

epistemological assumptions. Rather than thinking of knowledge as "produced," "finite," and "generalizable" (pp. 430-431), Taylor advocates for an idea of knowledge as "an open-ended process in which sense, intuition, and those "eureka moments" feature alongside and as strongly as logic, deduction, and rationality." Like the concept of becoming, a posthuman version of *Bildung* involves the "(self-)shaping" of individuals as "intra-active processes with many different "others" in a shifting and processual assemblage of co-constitutive events, instances, and processes" (Taylor, 2017, p. 430). A posthumanist *bildung* might otherwise be seen as "an image of a learning society . . . in which the real encounters with who and what is other are a constant and continuous possibility" (Biesta, 2002, p. 350).

I believe this posthumanist version of *bildung* is more along the lines of what Greene, Dewey, Freire, Deleuze, and Guattari had in mind when they wrote about becoming, and that it is perhaps a connection between the two concepts that helps us understand the critical aspects of what it means to continually become: to acknowledge both the uniqueness and the incompleteness of our own consciousnesses; to reach toward new perspectives and complexified ways of knowing, and to strive for such through empathetic interactions with others in the specific contexts and societies through which we move.

On Music(ing) and Teaching

Finally, this dissertation about the teaching and "doing"[1] of music; these are contexts of my philosophical engagements and the narratives of becoming that I portray throughout this dissertation. As I became interested in Greene's philosophical work, I tried to imagine what a

[1] I nod here to Christopher Small (1998) for his use of the word, "musicking," a term that emphasizes a kind of musical involvement that is both active and continuous throughout a variety of contexts. The use of 'music' as a verb in the gerund form emphasizes the ongoing actions that characterize our musical endeavors; music conceived of this way is not some*thing* that has already been created or done by someone else, but it is an *action* we participate in that continues to evolve throughout our lives.

dissertation centered around her ideas about consciousness, education, and aesthetics might look like in the context of K-12 music classes—my own teaching context the context in which I strive "to do philosophy." Although Greene includes music in her conception of "the arts" and occasionally draws upon musical works to depict her ideas, Greene was primarily a literary scholar whose understanding of the arts was anchored in works of English literature and poetry; she also drew upon visual art as a secondary form. Much of the major scholarly writing on Greene's work is also written by scholars in the field of English and English Education. As I began reading her work, there were ideas of hers that resonated with me deeply—her urging of teachers toward wide-awakeness for the purpose of provoking such in students, her imploring that education should serve the purpose of helping students find ways to create musical meaning for themselves and in their communities—and I wanted to explore what these ideas might look like in a musical setting.

I started to think about the ways Greene saw the arts as a forum for becoming wide-awake through learning about their form and context and as a medium through which we might strive to re-imagine aspects of our societies. Jeffers (1998) recounts an invited address given by Greene to the American Education Research Association (AERA) in 1989, in which Greene described the difficulty she had in writing the paper that eventually became "Cherishing the Earth: Toward a Pedagogy of Peace"; Greene's description of her own writing process in this address helped illuminate this central aspect of her aesthetic philosophy for me: "I had to write the peace paper and I didn't know what to write—everything's been said and written. So I read a poem—I used it in the paper. It recaptured me, gave me new perspectives . . . You can never use up Cezanne or Picasso or Melville." Greene's return to a familiar poem, in this example, caused her to think about the concept of peace in a new way and allowed her to make new meaning on

the topic through writing her own paper and re-imagining the poem in a new context. Greene's description of the poem's having "recaptured" and brought "new perspectives" to her current work and meaning-making showed me what artistic encounters through her philosophy could look like and what they might do.

In most of the musical settings of my own education, we spent a great deal of time learning about the form of a particular piece and breaking it down into an understanding of its various "musical elements" of rhythm, melody, harmony, articulation, tempo, dynamics, etc. Sometimes we would consider the piece's context, but this was usually a secondary goal that served to help me better execute elements of musical form better: Baroque-era mordents begin on the upper of two notes, so I did this when I play Minuet in G on the piano, myself; Classical-era piano sonatas are articulated smoothly and evenly with a flourishing motion and gradual dynamic changes, so I stayed away from marcato accents and dynamic extremes; Stravinsky would have played his Scherzo for Piano at exactly this tempo (it says so, here, in the score), so I set my metronome and attempted to do the same. We studied the formal aspects of the piece (and sometimes the historical contextual ones) and spend countless hours drilling and perfecting our own performances of such; good performances are ones that are stylistically accurate according to the piece's historical context and musical score, executed with technical precision, and are emotionally expressive (but only so far as is allowed by the historical period out of which the piece originates).

I also began to consider my own music education in light of the visual art and literature classes of my school-aged years: in my 6th grade art classes, we learned about post-impressionistic painters like Van Gogh and Seurat, learned about their famous paintings—*Starry Night* and *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*—and then painted our own ideas

in their varying styles: my own pointilist rendering of our beloved family cabin with a swirling sunset of golden skies over the lakefront and tufts of smoke rising from our campfire near the water. This painting represented both my 12-year-old self's understanding of two famous works of art and their contexts as well as my own making of meaning through my interpretation of these artistic concepts into a new and personal context. I recall going through similar artistic processes as an English student: reading works of poetry and literature, deconstructing them for understanding, and then reconstructing my stories, inspired by elements of this artistry.

The artistic processes I engaged in as an art and English student were not at all like that of my music classes. In my music classes, we focused primarily on how *to play* the music by following a score and practicing the skills necessary to render a reasonably accurate interpretation. The ends of our musical endeavors in these classes was always a performance, during which we would display our mostly-"correct" renderings of the various musical scores we had been practicing. After the concert, we would begin the process again with new scores, working toward future performances. An application of this process to visual art or English would be strange: "Here is my most accurate rendering of Van Gogh's Starry night—behold the photographic likeness between his and mine!" or "I present to you an exact replication of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*": as you can see from the identical opening sentences—'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife' (Austen, 1813/2001)— the likeness is uncanny."

I'm not trying to suggest that music ought to be in every way like art or literature (or dance, drama, poetry, etc.) nor that it cannot possess both similarities and differences to other practices within the category of "art." I am, however, interested in the ways that other art forms might embody the artistic processes of imagination and re-imagination in ways that my own

music education did not. I am curious about what a music class might look like when a goal shifts from "performing a score" to "re-imagining a score." Of Greene's educational philosophy, Pautz (1998) writes that "the most important function of school is to provide an environment in which students can explore choices, raise questions and reach for alternatives in the situatedness of their lives" (p. 34). What might it look like for a trumpet section to explore a series articulation choices for a particular passage, come to a consensus, and inform the director of their interpretive decision? How might a discussion between a piano teacher and student on Richard Wagner's antisemitic political writings impact the study of the composer's piano sonatas? What would happen if beginning band students were encouraged to re-imagine the famous "Ode to Joy" melody in a variety of hip-hop, rock, and alternative styles?

I wonder about what a music classroom where students and teachers have space to imagine and create meaning might look like. Where might students be given opportunities to re-envision a piece they're working on for the next concert? Where are students exploring contexts and meanings of the music they experience in class? Where are students making their own meaning through their encounters with music? Where are students making choices about the ways they engage in music? About what the music, itself, consists of? Where might students learn about the people from whom a musical culture originates? What might students create? What kinds of questions do students pose about the musical works they encounter? About society? By whom are these questions being asked? I believe (as I think Greene also did) that it is only in situations where teachers view themselves as becoming that students may come to do the same, to strive toward musical situations that reflect their own questions and journeys toward meaning.

Study Overview: Purpose, Plan, Methodology

In *Teacher as Stranger*, Greene writes that doing philosophy means becoming "highly conscious of the phenomenon and events in the world as it presents itself to consciousness" (Greene, 1973, pp. 6–7). The purpose of this study is to explore deeply—to become "highly conscious of"—the musical meanings created and perceived in lives and classrooms where music teachers see themselves as becoming. This is also a dissertation that explores and interrogates my own becoming as a musician and teacher. Through the use of phenomenology as a broad, structural approach to research that I believe gestures toward openness, I strive to explore the space between my participants' and myself: their becomings and my own, their imaginations and mine, their awakenings and mine as well.

In Chapter I, I have presented a precursory review of literature in order to situate my own study amongst others in the field of education, namely within dissertations focused on the philosophical work of Maxine Greene. I have also outlined a theoretical framework guided by Greene's concepts of philosophy as *doing*, teaching as *becoming*, and art as *re-imagining*. I continue to develop these theoretical concepts that frame my study in Chapter II alongside my own stories of music teacher becoming. The rest of my related literature is woven throughout Chapters 4, 5, and 6 alongside the stories of my music teacher participant becomings. I will explain this choice in greater detail throughout the "data analysis" section of Chapter III; in summary, this structure for my literature review was methodologically and epistemologically necessary because I did not know what scholarly writings I might need to draw upon before engaging with the unique stories of becoming that my participants told me. The necessarily open methodological design required that I wait to seek out relevant literature as it related to each of my participants unique perceptions of their lived lives.

I begin my dissertation research in Chapter II with stories of my own becoming—becoming a musician and becoming a teacher—which I strive to reflexively examine in light of Greene's work. I have purposefully chosen three music teachers for the study who (using Greene's word) have "re-captured" me. They are music teachers who have described their experiences in and beliefs about teaching music in ways that I believe show a commitment to wide-awakeness and growth. They are teachers who, from my perspective, are working toward changes in their music classes that they believe will allow for openings, for meeting the needs of more of their students. Since it is through my own consciousness—my own, unique and incomplete perspective on reality—that the phenomenological meanings expressed by participants in this study are viewed, my own perceptions of the "data" I gather from participants are also "data" to be explored.

In Chapter III, I outline my methodological choice for this study, phenomenology, primarily as it is conceived of in Dahlberg et al.'s (2008) *Reflective Lifeworld Research*. In employing this methodological approach, I aim to maintain a strong commitment to the epistemological assumptions of phenomenology (detailed in chapter three) and an engagement in the practice of researcher reflexivity which is necessitated by this approach.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I tell stories of three music teachers' becomings alongside my own. Among a variety of topics, these stories highlight central aspects of participants' lived experiences and identities, values they hold about music and education, unanswered questions and challenges they face in continuing to evolve as teachers, musicians, and people.

In Chapter VII, I explore the concept of storytelling as it relates to the stories I have told throughout this document and Maxine Greene's work. In Chapter VIII, I look at the concept of "courage" in the context Marc's, Charlie's, Greg's, and my becomings.

Research Questions

While it is easy, as Greene (1978) writes, to identify ourselves according to categories and labels, to teach as we have been taught, and to perceive meaning through what Edmund Husserl (1980) calls "the natural attitude," I wonder, as Greene did, what happens when these ways of knowing and being are suspended—when we are jolted from the numbness of commonplace understanding and prodded to think deeper, or perhaps in ways that are unfamiliar, to consider perspectives—the frequencies unknown—that are not our own. *What happens, I wonder, when music teachers are invited to view themselves and their practices as "becoming"?*

I also wonder about my own role—my own becoming—in this study. Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach to research, is founded upon the epistemological assumption that consciousness is unique and incomplete, such that the ways in which the researcher perceives the data are as much a part of the data as the information perceived and communicated by participants.[2] So I ask, *What resonances exist between my own becoming and my perceptions of those expressed by my participants of their becomings?*

Finally, I strive to become attuned to and "highly conscious of" the efforts made by teachers who are working toward their own becomings and support those of their students. Of my own becoming and of those expressed by my own participants through a metaphor explored in greater detail in chapter two, I ask as I listen, *What are the sounds of striving?*

[2] A set of ideas I explore in greater detail throughout chapter three.

Chapter II

BECOMING

In this chapter, I narrate aspects of my own becoming as a musician and teacher in light of several of Greene's ideas that I have found particularly meaningful. Through striving toward a critical and reflexive understanding of my own experiences, I aim to engage in the process of philosophy: to "see big" of the individual contexts I am a part of, think deeply about Greene's ideas, and to become more consciously aware of my situation perceptions of such. I begin this chapter with a story—a person— that has continued to re-capture me.

Becoming a Musician

"I spent most of my childhood listening to the sounds of striving" (Obama, 2018, p. 1). Of all the places the former First Lady of the United States of America might have begun her bestselling autobiography, Michelle Obama begins her story of becoming with a piano lesson. There was something about this opening line that re-captured me when I read it alongside Greene: I pictured my beginning band students, earnestly heaving the maximum capacity of air their lungs could hold into their shiny, new trumpets and saxophones, cheeksy rosy and puffed, trying to produce a sound—*any* sound. I remembered the excitement I felt when I held a trumpet for the first time—caressing its smooth lacquer, depressing its valves, noticing my distorted reflection in its bell. And I thought about my own childhood piano lessons—the exercises, the songs, the metronome's tireless click—the continual striving.

The soundtrack of students practicing below the floorboards of Obama's own residence—at the direction of her great-aunt Robbie—was the ever-present backdrop of her

youth, long before she laid her own hands on the ivory instrument in her family basement. Remembering her very first piano lesson, Obama muses, "I was pretty convinced I had already learned piano . . . through straight-up osmosis" of the songs from Robbie's method book (2018, p. 8). This turned out to be partly the case, she remembers, and in conjunction with an achievement-driven personality, young Obama sailed through her beginning piano method book with gusto. Much to the delight of her strict and devoted piano-teacher-aunt, Obama began her piano lessons with remarkable energy and fortitude.

It wasn't long though, Obama remembers, before the student-teacher relationship went sour and a series of arguments ensued. The cause for their discord: Obama had begun learning the songs from the method book out of order. From Obama's perspective, Robbie was the kind of person who demanded that piano (literally) be played "by the book" and was completely unimpressed (if not moderately angry) with Obama's personal rearrangement of the book's sequence. Obama recalls arguing with her: "How could you be mad at me for wanting to learn a new song?" Robbie's reproaches—"You're not ready for it"—remained steadfast to the authority of the method book's progression in spite of Obama's protestations: "But I *am* ready. I just played it" (p. 9).

As I pictured young Michelle Obama's strife at the keyboard, I thought back through my own childhood years as a piano student. While my piano teacher had not been the harsh disciplinarian that Obama characterizes of her aunt, she was certainly strict and similarly fixed in her methodological approach. I recall similarly practicing the songs near the back of the method book before we reached them in lessons: these were the songs that took up *a whole two-page spread* and were closer to the last-page certificate I knew I would eventually receive. I remember practicing "Oh When The Saints Come Marching" long before I was "supposed" to and

informing my teacher of my ability to play this one lesson; my piano teacher largely ignored my attempts at playing "the songs in the back of the book" with responses (as I remember them) to the effect of, "Well, I'd like to hear the songs I assigned you for this week instead."

Like Obama, I began my piano lessons as an excited, high-achieving student with a decent capacity for putting in the work necessary to satisfy (and sometimes impress) most of my teachers. Neither of my parents had studied music formally, although singing, listening, and dancing were almost always present in my home. My mom sang and played enough chords on her guitar to lead children's songs in Sunday school and my dad could often be heard crooning Italian Rat Pack songs along with the recordings in his car. I was excited to begin my "formal" study of music and remember feeling like my ability to read music and play the piano as a young child was my own, secret superpower—perhaps because it was likely one of the only things I felt I could do at that point in my life that my parents couldn't.

My parents paid to have the piano moved from my grandparents' basement to their own. Like Robbie's, it was an old, upright instrument made of yellowed wood and chipped keys–an ugly instrument–that was tucked away from plain sight in our home; I had to put on an extra layer of clothing before descending the stairs to our chilly, unfinished basement to play it. The trek was worth the effort, though, given my excitement to learn. I remember playing around on the piano before my first lesson: exploring its range of pitches with ascending and descending glissandos on the white keys and trying to plunk out simple melodies on the black ones.

On that first day of my lessons, I was eager to advertise to my new teacher that I had already learned a few songs on my own: "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and "Happy Birthday." I played my two-finger, four-black-keyed version of the former, beaming proudly at her after finishing. I don't remember her exact response, but it was a disinterested sort of "that's nice"

sentiment that was delivered as she plopped a brand new method book on the piano music rack and began writing my name on the cover with a sharpie. That was it, and that was how it would be in the coming years. I don't remember feeling particularly hurt or dashed at that moment—albeit a bit disappointed that my efforts had gone unpraised—but instead climbed aboard the train that chugged along through the various method books and the canon of piano works, stopping along the way at concerts, competitions, exams that were the landmarks of my progress and mapped the destinations of my future musical endeavors.

My piano teacher had a strong reputation in my community: she had a full studio with a waiting list, and every kid I knew who was "good" at piano took lessons from my teacher. I knew that some kids struggled to meet her rigorous practice demands and eventually stopped playing, but I was no quitter. Her linear, rigid approach to learning the piano didn't work for some kids (including several of my siblings) but *unlike* young Obama, this suited me just fine—I was proud of my teacher's high standards, of the efforts I continuously made toward meeting them, and of my status as one of the elite children disciplined enough to handle her rigorous musical demands.

It's not as if my musical endeavors at the piano were wholly prescribed for me—I got to choose between Mozart and Beethoven sonatas for the "classical era" portion of my exams and whether or not I wanted to play the suggested Debussy piece on the level nine contest list—(I did)—or if I even wanted to perform in the contest this year at all (although this decision was accompanied by a strong recommendation); I even got to play a few pop tunes during the summer months (there were rules, of course). I opted to pursue just about every performance opportunity my piano teacher suggested, plus a few more, including spending several summers at a piano camp through a local university. By and large, I'd loved it all.

Was I challenged in my piano lessons to create, arrange, improvise, or explore musics of traditions other than Western classical art music? Was I encouraged to learn to play anything without standard music notation? Was I emboldened to play around with or re-imagine a work of piano music into something new, something of my own choosing? An emphatic "no" to all of the above. Yet somehow I made it through nine years of piano lessons still possessing a love for the instrument as a technical and expressive skill set that I was able to rely on throughout college and my career as a music teacher.

False Consciousness

For a while, I struggled to connect a personal narrative to my dissertation work around Greene on account of feeling like my own musical background was too bland and uninteresting to write about. My own musical past likely resembles that of many of my peers who hold degrees in music: an education that emphasized the reading and performing Western classical art music, a quadruple-digit sum total of hours spent practicing, and a steadfast devotion to the honing of technical and expressive skill sets on my respective instruments. For the most part, I'd learned from kind and caring teachers who were passionate about music and who had put a good deal of effort into helping me enjoy music too: by and large I felt motivated and captivated by the various musical situations I took part in as a child, teenager, and college music major.

Yet as I grew as a teacher and musician, I also began to recognize the limitations of my musical skill set: I knew how to read music notation and how to play two instruments more proficiently than most Americans; I could hear a melody, rhythm, or chord progression and notate it on a five-line staff; I could describe common characteristics of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras of Western music; I could employ a whole lot of technical vocabulary when

listening to the radio (and often, I regret, with an air of disdain); I could execute a sensitively-articulated trumpet solo in a Schubert symphony, given my C trumpet, a notated score, and the subtle nod of a conductor in my direction. Yet I didn't know how to make music with my friends on a Friday night or with my siblings—all classically-trained musicians—during a holiday gathering. I knew how to play other peoples' music, but didn't really know how to create space for my own.

Greene begins her earlier works, such as in *Landscapes of Learning*, wrestling with and building upon ideas that stem from the tradition of Critical Theory. "False consciousness," Greene writes, is the complete "confinement of experience, a restriction of meaning"—by which we are "afflicted, even without our realizing it" (Greene, 1978, p. 22). This idea has continued to resonate as I look back on my own experience as a music student, particularly in light of my piano lessons—not in the sense that I was lied to or felt oppressed at the time, but in realizing that my piano lessons were largely restricted to the kinds of music making that are present in the Western Classical art music tradition. While it is inevitable that any educative experience will be limited by things like time and resources, and that there will always be music left untouched in any learning environment, I am primarily referring here to the *kinds* of music making—the musical *processes*—that I was encouraged to pursue. The rules that governed music making in my piano lessons were proscriptive of both the music, itself—Western classical—*and* the ways I engaged in it—namely in learning them through paying careful attention to the notated score. In other words, it wasn't just that I was restricted to playing Mozart or Beethoven at the exclusion of pop, jazz, rock, hiphop, or musics of other cultures; my piano curriculum also excluded music making in the form of learning songs by rote, harmonizing, improvising, re-arranging, composing, singing while playing, and in general, *exploration* of any kind. The falseness of my

musical consciousness as a piano student was that it denied the idea that music might be engaged in meaningfully—and striven toward—in a plurality of ways.

It is this kind of restriction of meaning that propels Greene's philosophical quest for deeper and expanded understanding, toward the idea that it is possible to free parts of ourselves—our consciousnesses—of these limitations. But how do we work against restrictions of meaning when we are unaware of such in the first place? How do we strive to know and understand when we are unaware that our understandings are limited? How, Greene asks, "are we to express what happens to us except through the categories and formulations handed down to us? How are we to escape stereotypes, cliches, and commonplaces?" (Greene, 1978, p. 32-33). If all of what we know and believe comes from people outside of ourselves, and if we are willing to forsake the knowledge we gain through lived experience on account of what we are told to believe, how are we to be free?

In his famous Allegory of the Cave, Plato vividly depicts a scene in which a group of prisoners sit, bound by shackles in a dimly lit room, conscious only of the shadowy figures cast onto walls of the cave by the fire and puppetmasters—their only way of knowing. Plato clarifies that the prisoners cannot even turn their heads to look at the fire or become aware of the other prisoners in the room, for they are bound to view only the shadow puppets in front of them. He explicitly informs the reader in his description that there is indeed a world outside of the cave—a fire behind, a road above, and people whose jobs consist of selecting objects of which to cast shadows for the prisoners; yet we the readers are led to understand that the prisoners can know nothing apart from what they are able to see—the shadowy images which they are physically restrained to view (Plato, trans. Bloom, 1991).

It is difficult to view the prisoners in the story with sentiments apart from pity, as we, the readers, bring to the story our own understandings of reality through experience. The idea that a person might literally be restrained to viewing shadow puppets for an entire lifetime might even seem so unfathomable to us that empathizing with a hypothetical person in this situation is too far a stretch from our own perceptions of reality to be meaningful. Upon reading the story, it is likely that we immediately assume the prisoners must feel oppressed by their bondage, that they must be in pain, or at least be severely bored; it is difficult to imagine that the prisoners might view their own situation as favorable, or at least, not unfavorable. But let's suggest, for the moment, that the prisoners *are* content in their situations: they don't feel the physical restriction as we would—the shackles are a part of their ankles in the same way that my wrist is a part of my arm; the shadows consist of a series of both familiar and unfamiliar images and are experienced similarly to the ways we might enjoy both the re-reading a beloved novel and the discovery of a new and intriguing story. What is to suggest that these prisoners, restricted by their own perceptions of the world, are any less content by their situations than any of us are, similarly restricted by our own perceptions?

In some ways, it feels like too harsh and perhaps exaggerated a metaphor to suggest that as a young piano student, I was a prisoner in Plato's cave: shackled to chains of standard notation and proper piano technique, listening only to projections of western classical music canon, striving only to know and emulate this music. The prisoner's in Plato's allegory were restricted solely to the images projected to them, while I was at least *aware* of other forms of musical engagements as a child. Yet if we try to imagine that the prisoners might actually be contented in the restricted natures of their consciousness—as I was as a piano student—and perhaps even that

they perceive some degree of meaning in the images that are projected, then the analogy feels more plausible.

Indeed, we do see that some of the prisoners *are* contented in their situations and prefer to remain in the cave as the story continues: the ignorant prisoners are shocked to awareness as their shackles are broken and as they are agonizingly dragged from the dimly lit room and shadowy figures, up a steep and rough path, into the blinding harshness of daylight. Imagine the agony of trying to walk on legs with atrophied muscles that had never born the weight of a human body, like those of a toddler—perhaps the idea of improvisation to a pianist whose entire engagement with music had consisted of reading notation. Imagine the searing pain of staring into the sunlight after a lifetime of perceiving in a dimly-lit room, like being roused from slumber by an overhead light being turned on in the middle of the darkness—perhaps this is a first encounter with a musical tradition or genre that feels unrecognizable. When presented with this new reality, some of the prisoners choose to remain in the pain and discomfort of their new awareness, while others return to the familiar cave, shadows, and shackles.

Plato's prisoners could not have known of reality beyond the cave without having been taken there by others who knew and perceived the world differently, yet it is an agency of consciousness that each prisoner exercises in deciding to either return to the cave or remain in the sunlight. Those who stay in the light act on a conscious commitment to what Greene refers to as "wide-awakeness" while those who return to the cave seek to conserve their former ways of knowing and refusing to move beyond. While the prisoners cannot choose to know the sunlight before they are exposed to it, they *can* choose to act in accordance or discordance with their knowledge after they have been brought to it.

Drawing from author David Thoreau (1884)—"To be awake is to be alive"—and from phenomenologist Alfred Schütz's, Greene builds her case for the necessity of *wide-awakeness*: a breaking free from the "routine," the "habitual," and the "mechanical" goings-on of everyday life (Greene, 1978, p. 42; Thoreau, 1884/2006; Schütz, 1962). Yet wide-awakeness generally does not occur spontaneously. As we see in Plato's allegory, the prisoners must first be dragged from their shackles by someone else—someone who has experienced life outside of the cave, someone who thinks it is worth knowing, someone who cares enough to help the prisoners see it. This is the purpose of education, for Greene: to provide the openings through which people can break free of false consciousness by learning to question and reflect upon their own knowledge of reality.

The process of becoming wide-awake is neither solely the product of the individual's conscious choosing nor solely the product of outside forces that awaken it. Miller (2010) explores Greene's rejection of the idea that individuals have no agency in their own constructions of consciousness and that when people engage in critical questioning of their perceived realities, "such processes may enable persons to reconceive and reconfigure their relations to the world, their ways of comporting themselves, and the varying perspectives through which the world presents itself to them" (p. 133). The process of becoming wide-awake involves both a commitment to continually becoming and responding to the "shocks of awareness"—the "ah-ha!" moments—that cause us to see reality differently (Greene, 1978, p. 185). Ultimately, it is the exercise of conscious agency that enable us to even perceive such as "shocks" as we consciously strive to create new meaning around them.

It wasn't until I became a teacher—and in particular, a music education graduate student—that I began to awaken to other ways of musical knowing and being. Although I can't

point to any one, specific time in which I remember being "dragged from my imprisonment into the harshness of daylight," nor a time when I hit by wave of existential crises that racked my teaching identity to the core upon having all of my former assumptions about music pulled out from under me in one fell swoop; yet I have gradually (and am continuing to) become a different music teacher than I was ten years ago, and a different music teacher—I humbly hope—than the many music teachers I have had the privilege of knowing and learning from throughout my own music education. I believe that much of who I now am and continue to become as a music teacher has been encouraged by curious music teachers who also see themselves as becoming; together, we continue to mull over the nagging questions—"what does it mean to be musical"? How important is learning to read Western music notation, *really*, when conceived of with this end in mind?—and the questions I'd never thought to ask—how might music make society more just?

Becoming a Teacher

I transition here in my personal narrative of becoming from musician—myself as a young piano student—to teacher. I have chosen this particular teaching situation for a few reasons: first, it portrays a relationship between piano teacher and student—only this time, *I* am the piano teacher instead of the student. Additionally, it represents my own striving to teach in ways that were consistent with my own awakening: to break free from "teaching how I was taught" and to consciously make space in our piano lessons to explore new ways of musical knowing. This teaching situation represents my striving to teach in ways that were consistent with the ways I had been becoming awake, as well as my striving to foster an environment for my student that gestured toward his own coming to such.

Wide-awake experiences in education must first begin with teachers: an idea that originally drew me to studying Greene. For better or for worse, we teachers are the gatekeepers of the kinds of learning that are encountered in a classroom: if we value things like rote-memorization, acquisition of a fixed and pre-defined set of knowledge, and view ourselves as the sole proprietors of curriculum, then our students' engagements in the class will likely reflect these values. But when we model curiosity, ask open-ended questions, create space for our students to bring their own experiences to the curriculum, and strive to share curricular responsibilities with our students, then students—we hope—may feel empowered to be curious and imaginative, themselves. "If we "truly want to provoke our students to break through the limits of the conventional and the taken for granted, we ourselves have to experience breaks with what has been established in our own lives; we have to keep arousing ourselves to begin again" (Greene, 1995, p. 109).

When I was hired to be Kai's piano teacher, I knew I wanted to help him experience music at the instrument in ways that allowed for more openness than my own childhood lessons had afforded. I wanted to make space for improvisation in our time together with the hope that he would feel supported to express his own musical ideas in ways that I had not. I wanted to encourage Kai to explore the keyboard and be intrigued by the kinds of sounds it could make—to view these sounds as a palette from which he could paint his own musical consciousness. Most of all, I wanted to model my belief that musical situations can and should be thought of as negotiable spaces that are open to re-mixings and re-imaginings (given that sensitivity is paid to particular contexts). I wanted him to view a musical score as a set of suggestions—an outline of someone else's musical ideas that could be used as a springboard into something new and

meaningful in its unique context. I wanted Kai to grow as a musician, free from the authority of the notes printed in a score and the force of the tradition that bore it.

And, of course, I wanted him to be able to play the piano with two hands and ten fingers, to develop the dexterity he needed to reach for chords and melodies, to learn to let his right and left hand function independently but simultaneously. I wanted him to be comfortable picking his favorite tunes out by ear at the keyboard without the self-conscious inhibition that often accompanies the kinds of "correct vs. incorrect" music making that emphasize the musical score. I wanted him to begin developing a repertoire of functional skills that he could apply to and rely on in a variety of musical situations throughout his life: a basic understanding of common chord progressions (especially in popular music), a few left hand accompaniment patterns, the ability to play a melody in his right hand and a bassline in his left hand, comfort playing chords while singing.

In the weeks leading up to my first lesson with Kai, I had spent a great deal of time thinking about *how* I planned to go about teaching and structuring the lessons in ways that reflected the music teacher I was becoming. The more difficult question then became *what* to teach. I knew I didn't want to put Kai on the same method book train that I had ridden for so many years, but I also understood the comfort this approach offered to teachers in its avoidance of the question, "What should I teach today?"

In one of her earliest influential essays, "Curriculum and Consciousness," Greene critiques curriculum as it is traditionally conceived to the extent that it consists of a defined set of knowledge to be mastered: curriculum "ordinarily represents little more than an arrangement of subjects, a structure of socially prescribed knowledge, or a complex system of meanings which may or may not fall within [a student's] grasp," Greene argues. "We are still too prone to

dichotomize: to think of “disciplines” or “public traditions” or “accumulated wisdom” or “common culture” as objectively existent, external to the knower—there to be discovered, mastered, and learned” (1971, p. 1). Rather, Greene advocates for a view of curriculum that emphasizes processes over products, content that is understood in its specific contexts, and situations where students can interpret and weave their own experiences and prior knowings into their encounters with subjects and ideas.

Yet as I stood in the Sam Ash music store during a midday lull in the Times Square hustle and bustle, I wondered what curriculum resources might possibly be meaningfully used during my time at the piano with Kai. I leafed through the section of piano methods—“accumulated wisdom”—and browsed their beginner books. Although they each employed slightly different songs and “kid-friendly” illustrations, each of these methods were basically just variations on a theme: a graduated progression through a series of tunes and exercises that led to a student’s being able to read standard Western music notation and develop basic piano technique. Mainly, these songs emphasized a variety of American folk tunes, classical melodies, and songs composed by the method book writers to highlight each new concept that was introduced in a sequential order. Some of them included activities and worksheets, promising to teach students music theory and history, others advertised the inclusion of “sight-reading drills” and note name flashcards. I came across the method book series that I had used as a student—the Alfred’s Basic Piano Library series—and quickly leafed past it with a pang of nostalgia. It was all so much of the same. Although I didn’t quite know what I was looking for, I knew I wasn’t going to find it here. I settled on a variety of beginning song books in several styles that emphasized common chord progressions and could be played (or not played) in any order; at the

very least, these books seemed like they might be able to offer some places of entry, given flexible pedagogy.

After doing some research online, I found a YouTube series called "No Book Beginners" that felt a lot closer to openness I was striving toward in lessons with Kai. "What's the best way to inspire, engage, and motivate beginner piano students at their very first lessons?" the YouTube piano teacher asks. "Is it about grabbing out the method book and chucking it on the music rack and pointing out middle C, showing them where it is and starting to read?" I smiled, thinking back to my own first day of piano lessons, perfectly characterized by this description. "Or," he continues, "is it about exploring the whole piano, creating musical stories, improvising, harmonizing, transposing, playing games, playing by ear?" *Yes,* I thought, now we're getting somewhere. " If you ask me," the teacher posits, "beginner piano lessons should be some of the most exciting, creative, and innovative lessons that you ever teach, and you can do it all without even opening a method book" (Topham, 2017). The sentiments expressed here felt like a more promising lead and as I delved deeper into the channel, I was encouraged by the kind of teaching that I was seeing.

In his 10-week, "No method series," this teacher recommends and describes a progression of activities he uses with his own beginning students to help them explore the piano. Lesson one began with a question for the student that I did not expect—not because I didn't want to hear it, but because it was a question I had never been asked at a beginning lesson, nor was it a question I had ever asked a beginning music student: "What can you play?" As simple as it was, this question, I realized, had a powerful implication: it assumed that the child could *already* play something, that she had *already* experienced something musical that was worth sharing.

I thought about what this question might have meant to me as a young piano student, eager to learn and eager to show my piano teacher what I could already play—Mary Had a Little Lamb, in my case. I wondered what it might have been like, had my teacher encouraged this little tune I'd shared with her at the beginning of my first lesson and challenged me to figure out something new by ear. In his beginning lesson notes, the YouTube teacher encourages his students to explore the various sounds a piano can make connected to a theme around animals—"What might a cheetah sound like as it races across the savannah?" "What if a frog hopped around the keyboard?"—co-narrating with the child: "Once upon a time, there was an elephant…" (plop, plop, plop goes the elephant in the lower octave). He encouraged teachers to improvise a duet with the songs students share, to join in the kind of music making that brought the student to the lesson in the first place. I imagined my former piano teacher improvising a jazzy accompaniment to my performance of Mary Had a Little Lamb, then switching to a classical alberti bass style, then leaving the piano to pick up a djembe and drum along with me. I laughed as I tried to picture the stately and proper piano teacher of my childhood riffing on a string of syncopated rhythms for an unstructured period of time.

The contrast between Mr. No-Book's first lesson and my own as a young piano student was stark, and the openness that I perceived in the lesson excited me; I'd wanted this kind of music making to be part of my lessons with Kai. I continued my search for curricular materials that I'd hoped would provide fodder for creative music making with Kai, pulling together an assortment of less-well-known books geared toward teaching beginning piano students in ways that were new to me: a series that included pieces learned by rote; a nonstandard notational system that provided a simpler alternative to beginners; a book called *Creative Chords* that emphasized common chord progressions and encouraged students to make musical decisions

around how they would play them; a collection of beginner songbooks in a variety of classical, folks, "kids," and pop styles. Heading toward that first lesson with Kai, I didn't have a curriculum. But I now had a few tools that we could use (or choose not to use) as Kai and I began creating our *own* curriculum together.

We began our first few lessons together improvising and I led with some of the musical ideas and chord progressions from Mr. No-Book Beginner. While I don't know that Kai had done this sort of thing with his previous music teacher, he didn't express much hesitation in these improvisatory settings and they soon became a ritualistic start of our lessons together. Often times, Kai would enter the classroom at the start of our lesson, greeting me briefly before immediately sitting down to play whatever chords, melodies, or fragments seemed to be in his head. Some days, it was like he was on a mission—like there were sounds that simply had to be played and it was his job to make sure this happened. Hurling his backpack across the room and making a bee-line for the piano, Kai would plop himself down on the bench and throw his right hand onto the keyboard in the shape of a chord with a splash of sound that would eventually work its way to something familiar like a C or G major.

I did my best to encourage these spontaneous bursts of music making at the beginnings of lessons by saving my "let's figure out the plan for today's lesson" discussion-starter for a time when Kai's playing came to a more natural break. Usually, I would listen for patterns and ideas in Kai's playing and then join him in the lower octaves with something I thought would be musically-supportive. Sometimes Kai seemed to enjoy this and we would work off of each other's musical patterns, styles, and ideas as we continued improvising for an indefinite amount of time at the beginning of our lesson. I came to recognize one of those "far-off musician looks" in Kai when it seemed that he was really concentrating on the sounds of our stream-of-

consciousness duet-playing: eyes focused, brow furled, tongue tucked tightly between his lips to the corner of his mouth. Other times, Kai would stop and inform me that I had imposed an "incorrect" style onto his ideas: "No," he would say, "that's too happy. . .more like this" as he pounded a couple of angsty chords into the keyboard with an increased intensity. I might match his more abrasive dynamics and articulation or perhaps change my part to a minor tonality to see if we could come to some sort of stylistic consistency. And on several occasions, my own musical presence was simply not a part of the vision he was executing: "I just—that's not—I just want to play by myself" (or words of a similar sentiment).

In striving to embody a more open, exploratory approach to piano lessons with Kai, I had to let go of the idea that our lessons needed to "cover" a predefined ordination of musical knowledge; I had to acknowledge that through this process of exploratory learning, our lessons would lead to both anticipated and unanticipated understandings, and that both would be worth pursuing. "Aesthetic experiences require conscious participation . . . an ability to notice what there is to be noticed, Greene writes, clarifying that it is not enough simply to "know about" things in the formal, academic sense (Greene, 1995, p. 125). Meaningful encounters with art require active participation in and construction of understandings. As Kai's teacher, I could of course guide, suggest, and promote our exploration of certain pathways, but in the end, I had to accept and embody what Greene describes as "a refusal to control what is discovered as meaningful" (p. 125).

When we worked on songs from standard Western notation, I strove to model a view of notated music as a set of suggested possibilities rather than as an instruction manual to follow in my pedagogy. At one point, Kai was working on a piece called "Musette"—a popular tune for beginning pianists by J.S. Bach. After he had figured out the right hand melody and identified

the left hand chords, I encouraged him to do some re-imagining: “Instead of playing the left hand chords for two beats each, what might make them more interesting?” He played four staccato quarter note G chords and then tried out the whole section with this style. “What else could you try?” I asked. Kai played a series of G chords at a furious tempo and frantically attempted to add his right hand in a jumble of sounds. After we shared a laugh, I asked, “What about this?” I modeled an Alberti bass pattern and Kai tried it out; we went back and forth this way, volunteering ideas for changing up the left hand of the tune until Kai found one he liked best. We played versions of the song that emphasized contrasting emotions—happy, angry, sad—and played with tempo: a super fast version of Musette, followed by one that was excruciatingly slow. He played with the right hand an octave higher and the left hand a few octaves lower; he played with hands crossed, and experimented with the various pedals. I don’t remember if the piece ever amounted to any sort of “final rendering” according to Kai’s preferred arrangement, but I do know that by the time we had moved on from Musette, the notated score had been thoroughly turned upside-down and mixed around.

While I believe my approach to piano lessons with Kai up until this point represented a more constructivist pedagogy (and what I viewed as a substantial departure from the more linear, method book-based approach that I had experienced in my own piano lessons), it was also an approach that was mostly centered around elements musical form. For Greene, engagement in both the form *and* context of artistic experiences are integral aspects of what it means to actively engage in art: “to refuse decontextualzations” (Greene, 1995, p. 11). And often, form and context are not so easily separated: take, for example, the hidden political mockery and protestation in Shostakovich’s nationalistic-sounding symphonies; the sorrow and lament of an American slave and mother in “All the pretty little horses, depicted in its wandering, dorian melody*;”* or Ruth

B.'s imaginative search for identity and belonging in "Lost Boy" through allusions to the *Peter Pan* story. The intermingling of form and context can inspire us to notice, enjoy, and wonder at the way art might express ideas in unexpected ways—like the proud, regal proclamation of a brass fanfare; the sweet, lilting tones of Israel Kamakawiwoʻole's ukulele playing; the contemplative, shifting major 7th arpeggios in Bach's "Prelude in C" for piano, the laid-back, yet forward-propelling rhythmic ostinato of the Bossa Nova bassline; the cheeky, playful vocal style in Gaga's version of "The Lady is a Tramp." While my own music education tended to focus on and prioritize matters of form—melody, rhythm, harmony, tempo, articulation, etc.—Greene's philosophy of education values both form and context and their relation to each other in artistic experiences.

Greene posits (and hopes), however, that artistic encounters will not stop here at students' knowledge of and experience with both art's form and context. The purpose of art, Greene argues, is that through awakening our senses and causing us to consider perspectives that are not our own, we can strive *to create new meaning and new spaces for ourselves and with others*. Art can help us "wake up" to new ways of being and knowing, Greene argues, so that we can connect more deeply and empathetically with others, strive to transform pieces of "our deficient societies," and create new meaning for ourselves (Greene, 1995, p. 5). Jeffers (1998) refers Greene's philosophical views on our relationships with art as encompassing "Both Sides of the Looking Glass." Through one side of the looking glass, we can examine art's form and situated context; through the other side, we examine ourselves and the extent to which these artistic ideas might challenge us to think differently and to create new meaning. In this way, art can be both an explorative endeavor as we learn about the art object, itself, and a creative one as we allow our perspectives to change and become, as we create new meanings for ourselves.

Most importantly, Greene believes art serves as a medium through which we can pose questions, express, and strive to understand our unique experiences in the world. Greene argues that when arts are situated central to curriculum, "all kinds of reaching out are likely" (Greene 1978, p. 166). Yet, again, Greene does not suppose the connection between wide-awakeness and art to be inherent, but rather suggests that engaging in art is an act that has the *potential* for wide-awakeness when approached with intentionality by teachers and students. The kind of aesthetic experiences that Greene cares about are those that help us look at the world differently—ones that "lessen the immersion" in the ordinary and taken-for-granted parts of our lives (Greene, 1978, p. 173).

* * *

During a particular lesson, Kai and I were leafing through my stack of beginning piano songbooks in search of new repertoire. I read through some of the titles and played through a few arrangements before Kai delivered his choice: The Star Spangled Banner. I remember cringing inside, especially in light of the NFL protests of the song that had been making headlines recently in conjunction with American President #45's call for the athletes' dismissal from the league. I thought about black football players Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid who brought the song's racist historical ties and unsung third verse to the attention of the American public on national news; by kneeling instead of standing for the performance, they powerfully problematized the song's history—acknowledging their respect for the Americans who have served in the military while also refusing to ignore the historically racist agenda of composer Francis Scott Key. *Why this song?* I thought. It was probably as simple as the fact that Kai was

nine years old; it was a song he'd heard many times—maybe even sung—and its familiarity made it an enticing prospect to learn.

Admittedly, I wasn't well-versed in the history of the song beyond what I'd heard about in the news; I was afraid to embark on a musical journey with a nine year-old in a way that drew attention to the controversy around the song, not really knowing what or how to pose questions around the song in a way that would be meaningfully age-appropriate. I was afraid of what his parents might think when he came home with controversial ideas about the song: would they think I was trying to indoctrinate him toward a particular side in our politically polarized culture? And yet I was also afraid of saying nothing, of merely glazing over the surface of the piece in our lessons to the end of "learning a new song," of pretending I didn't know what I *did* know about the song in relation to people of color; I was afraid both of being brave and of being cowardly at the same time. As I look back, I think I was grappling in this moment with a tiny sliver of the burden of wide-awakeness—the pain of staring at the sun once I'd left the cave, the agony of trying to walk on feet that had never before touched grass.

We worked on the right hand melody together for a while, and when Kai needed a break, I pulled up the song's lyrics and a live performance of it on Youtube. We listened to a few recordings, male and female performances of the song, remarking on their virtuosity and marveling at the anticipated "high note" when they sang it with gusto. On the Youtube sidebar of suggested videos, I saw a video entitled, "Star Spangled Banner, Minor Version." "Ooh," I said, "Let's see what this one sounds like." Kai had a beginner's understanding of major and minor tonalities at this point—"minor chords are the ones that sound sad and where your middle finger plays a black key instead of a white one"—and was accustomed to experimenting with and changing between the two in his own playing; he seemed intrigued by the video title too. We

listened, enraptured by this chilling and powerful rendition, sung in an a capella, belted pop style from what appeared to be this young man's home recording studio. At the conclusion, Kai immediately remarked on how strange this version sounded and how he didn't like it—but "could we listen again?"

As we continued to discuss the ways the minor tonality changed our experience of the song, I thought of a new idea, and googled Jimi Hendrix's 1969 Woodstock performance of the Star Spangled Banner. From the moment Hendrix released that first blast of sound, Kai's discomfort was palpable. Out of the corner of my eye, I watched his expressions morph from the narrowing of his eyes—"what?"— to a face tightly scrunched—"*what?!*"—to hands clasped over his ears before being cautiously lifted to hear more. The deliriously complex harmonics, the distortion of sounds that denature into stratospheric overtones, the familiar melody that forges through the chaos of rocketing glissandos and explosive chords: it was a lot for Kai—and for me—maybe for anyone—to take in. "Why?! Just–*WHY*?!" he burst, halfway through the video.

At the conclusion of Hendrix's performance, Kai asked again, clearly in distress, "Why? Why would he do that?" I thought for a moment, knowing I wouldn't have a satisfying answer for him. "Maybe he wanted to create a version of the song that was different or like something nobody had ever heard?" I suggested. Kai's wide eyes and audible "Pfff!" suggested that perhaps the word "different" was too gross an understatement to be convincing. "Maybe he thought it was beautiful?" I posed. This too was a hard sell for Kai, but I continued: "You and I might not be used to the sound of the electric guitar played in this way, but it was his instrument, just like the piano is yours….maybe he liked the sound of it the way you like the sound of the piano?" Kai still seemed skeptical but also slightly more open to this idea as it related to his own musical experience. "And," I added, "Some people think that Jimi Hendrix played the song this way to

protest the Vietnam War and the U.S. government….like maybe some of the loud, harsh sounds show that he was angry." At this point, one of the after-school teaching assistants had come to collect Kai and bring him to his mom for pick-up. Our conversation ended abruptly without any kind of resolution.

In hindsight, I wish there would have more time to discuss this topic with Kai, and I wish I would have *made* more time for discussions like these in future lessons. I wish we would have listened to the recording again, picking out the images of war that Hendrix vividly paints with his guitar. I wish we would have watched the interview clip of 26-year-old Hendrix on the Dick Cavett show, speaking about his performance, that I didn't watch until later after the lesson. When asked by Cavett the very same question posed by Kai—"why?"—a docile, contemplative Hendrix responds, "I don't know, man . . . I'm an American, so I played it. They made me sing it in school, so it was a flashback" (Cavett, 1969). Yet as Cavett invites the audience to remember that Hendrix served in the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. army before judging his "unorthodox" performance, Hendrix becomes more animated. He interjects, "Well listen, it's not unorthodox!"—Cavett: "It isn't unorthodox?"—Hendrix: "No, no . . . I thought it was beautiful." The audience applauds.

* * *

Throughout her later works, Greene often returned to Wallace Stevens's poem, *The Man with the Blue Guitar*; or in this case, we might extend the metaphor to Jimi Hendrix on his white, Fender Stratocaster. Through the persona of the guitarist, Stevens wrestles with the tension between perceptions of reality and imagination—the latter of which is famously signified by "the blue guitar," on which things are not played "as they are" (Stevens 1937/1954; Greene, 1995;

Cook, 2007; Cerna, 1975). Written in 33 parts, the first section of Stevens's poem begins:

> A man bent over his guitar,
> A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.

The poem can be seen as a conversation between guitarist—Hendrix, in this case—and his audience—Kai and me—over the composition and performance of poetry (Cerna, 1975), which I am interpreting more literally here in the context of music. The audience speaks to the guitarist:

> They said, "You have a blue guitar,
> You do not play things as they are."

Kai's own response to Hendrix's performance of "The Star Spangled Banner" seems to be in agreement with the audience of Stevens's guitarist, characterized by his visible and audible discomfort—"Why?!"— in experiencing Hendrix's rendition for the first time. His expectations of hearing a more traditional or familiar version of the song were challenged by Hendrix's performance. Greene writes, "To play upon the blue guitar is to play upon imagination, and the sound evokes listeners' ambivalence" (Greene, 1995, p. 19). Stevens's guitarist continues, in dialogue with his audience:

> The man replied, "Things as they are
> Are changed upon the blue guitar."

Hendrix resists Cavett's characterization of his performance as "unorthodox," while offering that he preferred to think of it as "beautiful." Yet, his version of the Star Spangled Banner at the end of the 1969 Woodstock was one that was undoubtedly original, stirring, and provocative; the Star Spangled Banner "as it was" had indeed been changed upon Hendrix's own guitar (otherwise it wouldn't have been worth talking about in the first place or have stirred such a public interest). Perhaps what Hendrix resists here is more the negative connotations typically associated with the word "unorthodox" rather than the meaning of the word as nontraditional. And perhaps he too, like Stevens, is wrestling with the question of what might make art recognizable yet imaginative:

of “loyalty to his own thoughts (or imagination) and loyalty to an average audience (or reason) which unwaveringly demands for ‘things as they are’” (Cerna, 1975). The audience in Stevens’s poem continues in dialogue:

> And they said then, “But play, you must,
> A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,
>
> A tune upon the blue guitar
> Of things exactly as they are.”

A seemingly impossible task is demanded of the guitarist in these stanzas: the performance of a tune that is both familiar and unfamiliar to his audience, a rendering that is both the same and different from what it knows. And yet in his famous, Woodstock performance, Hendrix succeeds in doing just this by playing an anthem that is officially deemed as part of what it means to be American—“ourselves”—in a way that also seems to be completely beyond the ways in which the song is typically experienced. Was Kai interested in Ariana Grande’s expressive, NFL performance of The Star Spangled Banner at an NFL game that we watched on youtube at the beginning of the lesson? Sure. But did it provoke an emotive, demandingly inquisitive reaction from him that suggested he was challenged by the interpretation? Hendrix’s rendition certainly did.

As Greene continued to develop Schütz’s concept of wide-awakeness—a breaking free from the commonplace, the mundane, from “things as they are”—her interpretation of it became enlarged by the concept of imagination; we see this trend in her return to Stevens’s poem in seven of her Lincoln Center lectures (compiled in the book, *Variations on a Blue Guitar*), and in five essays of her final book, *Releasing the Imagination*. Greene clarifies that “imagination is not only the power to form mental images,” as we might ordinarily think of it, “although it is partly that. It is also the power to mold experience into something new, to create fictive situations,” to

allow for the changing of "things as they are" (Greene, 1980, p. 30; Stevens, 1937/1954). It is "a mode of grasping, of reaching out that allows what is perceived to be transformed" (Greene, 1980, p. 31).

Cerna (1975) supports that imagination, as Stevens conceives of it in his poem, does not exist on its own, in the abstract, apart from reality: it flows "into the level of a common or possible experience;" imagination develops, enlarges, challenges, and adds to what we already perceive: "things as they are." In other words, it was Hendrix's *re-imagining* of the Star Spangled Banner is exactly what made the song such a provocative experience for Kai and me that day in our piano lesson: it was his transforming of a song that represents both "ourselves" as Americans and "things as they are" into "a tune beyond us" that caused Kai and me to stop, to wonder about, and even to react in pain toward the unexpectedness of Hendrix's variation.

One of most important aspects of imagination, Greene argues, is that it allows us to strive toward empathy: it enables us to try and envision ourselves in someone else's shoes, to try and see life from their eyes, to consider their own consciousness of reality, to strive toward what Greene describes as "becoming a friend of someone else's mind" (Greene, 1995, p. 38). After the piano lesson with Kai, I found myself wondering more about who Hendrix was. I'd heard his name spoken by musicians countless times, heard him described as "the greatest guitar player who'd ever lived." I'd remembered hearing his rendition of The Star Spangled Banner and how it had stirred up controversy in its being (almost certainly) a form of protest toward the Vietnam War. As I sat at my computer one afternoon, Googling what basic information I could find about Hendrix, a host of questions began to arise: What had it been like to rise to such musical stardom as a Black man in the 1950s and 60s? To serve in an army and fight in a war I didn't believe in? What did it feel like to have so much to express, musically, and to have the kind of imaginative,

performance facility to express it so well? And what was it like to struggle with the kind of substance addiction that ultimately claimed Hendrix's life in 1970? What tragic circumstances had brought him to this ledge in the first place? It is empathy that allows us to see a person's humanity rather than seeing them as the "other," and while I don't pretend to understand how it might have felt to be Jimi Hendrix at any point in his life, I *can* say that it is his music that has caused me to wonder, to strive for understanding. I think these are the kinds of open, honest, and meaningful discussions that Greene hoped art would provoke in our classrooms.

As I have started to explore in this chapter already, Greene believed that the arts were a rich source of opportunities for wide-awakeness—expressions and imaginations that challenge us to think about and perceive the world differently—and that through engaging in both the formal *and* contextual aspects of art, we can become more wide-awake. *Social imagination*, as Greene comes to call it in her later works, goes beyond learning *about* the form and context in a work of art; it both encompasses *and* moves beyond our constructions of new meaning. Social imagination involves an active engagement in the art and a willingness to apply the understandings we come to our lived (and social) situations; it involves becoming wide-awake through (artistic) experiences that challenge our commonly held perceptions and ways of thinking (wide-awakeness) and extends to new constructions of meaning in our own situations and contexts. Social imagination requires that we "invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools" (Greene, 1995, p. 5).

Social imagination, I believe, is at the heart of what it means "to do philosophy" for Greene: to dwell on the (sometimes troubling) questions that are intimately connected to our own lives and contexts and to "respond to actual problems and real interests;" we can do this, in part,

through letting ourselves express and be provoked by our experiences with art (Greene, 1978, p. 4). The particular piano lesson that I have narrate here involves a reaching toward something "beyond ourselves," for both Kai and me: Kai's questions, I believe, were more directly tied to the ways in which music might express something known but in unexpected ways, while my own were more about how might I, as a teacher, bring about wide-awakeness in my own teaching situations through music, in ways that might be meaningful and appropriate for my students. As I look back on my own uncertainties and insecurities as a music teacher during this piano lesson with Kai, I am regretful that our conversations over Hendrix's performance and its potential application to Kai's own engagement in the tune did not go deeper. Yet, I am also grateful for the ways in which this lesson has furthered my own becoming in light of Greene's call to socially-imaginative education through the arts and Stevens's portrayal of the fusion between imagination and reality that can occur when we allow ourselves to see it; I am grateful for the ways in which the time I spent with Kai is challenging me to become more open, more awake, and more imaginative in my teaching—to allow for the exploration of questions, possibilities, and re-imaginings that go beyond the kind of musical thinking and doing from my own childhood piano lessons.

Chapter III

LISTENING FOR SOUNDS OF STRIVING

Part 1: What Is Phenomenology?

Greene herself identified as an existential phenomenologist—one of the only "labels" she claimed with throughout her writing—and spent a great deal of time thinking about human consciousness as it relates to education and the arts. While my dissertation does not explore the nature of consciousness and human existence in the way that Greene does, I have chosen phenomenology as a way of engaging with my participants, data, and analysis because I believe is epistemologically consistent with Greene's philosophical ideas. So then what is "phenomenology" and how might it function as a research design? Etymological understandings might lead us to conclude that "phenomenology" is the "study" of a "phenomenon," in the way that "biology" is understood as the "study of what is living" or "sociology" as "the study "human social behaviors." Phenomenology, however, should only be understood this way in conjunction with a specific set of epistemological assumptions.

Epistemological Considerations

Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nystrom's (2008) Reflective Lifeworld Research—a strand of the phenomenological research tradition which will be further examined throughout this chapter—holds the same basic assumptions about consciousness as Greene: a.) Consciousnesses are unique and every individual holds their own perspective on reality (thus we cannot know reality, objectively); b.) Consciousnesses actively reach toward meaning; and c.) Consciousnesses are always *of* reality. Embedded in this discussion is the idea that consciousnesses are continually changing ("becoming") and making meaning as people move

throughout their lifeworlds. I begin this exploration of phenomenological meanings and epistemological assumptions through a metaphor and recently acquired hobbyist enthusiasm: coffee.

Although I have disliked its taste up until recent years, my initial interest in coffee grew from the visual aesthetic rather than the taste of the beverage, itself. My parents had purchased a Nespresso coffee machine that poured a cup of coffee that was so visually seductive I couldn't turn it down. Served in clear, heat-tempered glass mugs, the coffee I drank when I visited my parents flowed from the machine in a creamy tan consistency, and settled into my cup in layers: the deepest shade of deep, chocolatey liquid at the bottom, fading into a rich chestnut, topping off with an inch of light, frothy crema. I still didn't like the taste, but I wanted to be a part of this ritual. And then there was the hipster-coffee-shop-pour-over that served as the slipperiest of slopes into my becoming an actual coffee enthusiast: it came on an individual, made-to-order platter that arrived at my table in a special glass beaker, waiting to be poured into its designated ceramic mug at my own discretion. At first the flavor was just an afterthought from what drew me to order the coffee in the first place: the purposeful presentation, the coziness of warming my hands around the ceramic mug during winter months, the slight buzz of energy that fueled my work afterward. Eventually, though, I began to enjoy the bright acidity of freshly brewed light roast, and the bitterness of an espresso shot topped with a few dollops of frothy whole milk. While it has been a part of my awareness since I can remember, my relationship with and the meanings I have constructed around "coffee" have evolved over the years.

Consciousnesses Are Unique

The world of coffee tasting is a humorous conglomeration of vivid descriptors and varied perspectives. For instance, the Kenyan coffee I am drinking as I type this comes from a bag of

beans that reads, “Unrefined sugar sweetness envelopes the top notes of tangy lemon, complex citrus, stone fruit, blackberry, and a subtle baking spice aroma; a classic, bright Kenyan cup.” I do enjoy the imaginative, flamboyant nature of these descriptors—are we talking about my grandmother’s homemade Christmas pie or about *“coffee*?!” (The extent of my own analysis was “bright, tangy, fruity”).

Greene’s epistemology begins with the idea that every person—every consciousness—views the world from a unique vantage point and holds a particular interpretation—*or flavor*—of reality—*in this case, coffee beans*. Assuming they were not entirely made up for comedic purposes, the mash-up of descriptions on my bag of coffee beans acknowledges that *someone* tasted this coffee and thought, “blackberries,” while someone else imagined peaches, plums, and apricots: the variety of taste profiles emphasizes the diversity of perspectives experienced by each of the tasters. Notions of objectivity—*the “true” taste of my coffee beans*—are both irrelevant and impossible because Greene’s epistemology assumes people will always experience and interpret reality according to their own perspectives and contexts.

Yet while there is no way to determine how the coffee *objectively* tastes, we might acknowledge (as the label on my Kenyan beans does) a conglomeration of perspectives—what Greene refers to as “collective consciousness”—that aided in the shaping of the coffee’s description. So while we cannot know or point to any sort of objective truth outside of ourselves, Greene acknowledges that we experience reality not in isolation but with others alongside whom we live (Greene, 1995, p. 65). It is also within these various social contexts that we may begin to see ourselves differently—to continue becoming—through being challenged by those who perceive, construct, and move through the world in different ways.

Consciousnesses Are Of Reality

Consciousness, for Greene, is an active endeavor through which "aspects of the world present themselves to living beings" (Greene, 1978, p. 14). Consciousness always requires agency—intentionality—and exists in *relation to* reality; consciousness is always *of* something. *Thus, if there is no coffee, there can be no descriptions of flavors perceived*. While it might seem obvious in this concrete scenario, the epistemological distinction is important for Greene and the tradition of phenomenology; while other philosophical traditions may view consciousness as being an essence in itself, apart from reality and possessing independent qualities of its own that are unlinked to reality, phenomenologists see consciousness as being inextricably linked to our experiences in the world. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) write that "we are not in the world," but rather, "we *become* the world" by consciousnessly contemplating (p. 169, emphasis mine). Consciousness, for Greene, is not simply an "inner state" or inward focus, nor is it "empty" (Miller, 2010, p. 128); to be conscious is to perceive something in some way from some (one's own) point of view, such that there is no separation between "the knower" and "the known" (Greene, 1978, p. 10).

Consciousnesses Actively Reach Toward Meaning

During a recent family gathering, I gave my parents a demonstration of the home coffee roaster I own and the process by which it turns the green coffee beans I order from Oakland, California into the dark, roasty goodness that is ground into our favorite, aromatic beverage. I opened up a fresh bag of green, Ethiopian coffee beans, lifted it to my nose, and inhaled deeply, "Mmmm, smell this! It's like a bag of chocolate." I held the bag to my dad's nose and he did the same. After a pause, he said, "Hmmm . . . smells like paint." My mom and I shared a laugh: "Oh

come on, Rich," she said, "let me smell them." After taking a sniff of her own, my mom declared," Yeah, actually. I smell paint too."

This scene, in my memory, is both a hilarious example of individuals' unique perspectives on reality—*is it "chocolate" or is it "paint?"*—and the extent to which our consciousnesses of reality are interpretations we *construct* for ourselves (Greene, 1978, p. 17). Consciousness is a choice "to struggle toward" new meaning—*could coffee really smell like paint?*— and a questioning of our commonplace thinking (Miller 2010, p. 128). Consciousness is active and open to possibilities and re-imaginings.

These constructions of reality often occur in accordance with reality as we have formerly experienced it: an acquiescence to knowledge of the world as it has been presented to us. *Having renovated many houses throughout the course of their married lives, perhaps my parents' more intimate knowledge of "paint" as a smell caused them to reach for this term in trying to decipher a new sense; perhaps it was the pale green color of the beans that reminded them of a particular shade of living room walls that influenced their word choice*. And sometimes our consciousnesses represent our active endeavors toward creating the realities of an existence we desire. Thus, at any given moment, there are "multiple realities available to human consciousness" at any given moment (Greene, 1978, p. 16).

* * *

We return to the question, "What is phenomenology," in light of these epistemological assumptions and extended coffee metaphor. With the idea in mind that the study of any phenomenon (coffee, in this case) is necessarily bound by uniquely perceived and constructed meanings (how it uniquely tastes to each person who drinks it), we can understand

phenomenology as the study of *perspectives* and *meanings* that individuals hold and construct around a shared experience or phenomenon. Phenomenology is not a quest to uncover any kind of objective or essentialized understanding of the phenomenon, itself; rather, we should understand phenomenology as the study of unique and contextually-based meanings that are constructed *around* a phenomenon. "Context" here refers to the situatedness of meaning in the entirety of our conscious, lifeworld experiences—*where are the coffee beans from? How were they roasted? How was the coffee brewed? What other foods might cause coffee to taste a certain way? How do these factors affect my preferences and perceptions of the coffee?* (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 49). Thus, phenomenology is only "the study of a phenomenon" insofar as "what the phenomenon is" is directly related to the unique meanings people construct around a particular experience. *We are not studying the cup of Kenyan coffee, we are studying the perceived experiences of those who drink it.*

The epistemological underpinnings of phenomenology set the stage for a way of going about research that is wholly different from other methodological designs rooted in positivism. Rather than being interested in objectivity—*how does the coffee "truly" taste?*—phenomenologists seek to describe and interpret, from their own perspectives, the ways others perceive reality—*what flavors they uniquely taste*—and the meanings they make of them. Phenomenologists do not generalize as positivists do, but instead look for structures of meaning in perceived realities of participants of the phenomena (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 95). Both the researcher *and* the participants hold unique perspectives of reality that are contextualized in their respective experiences; thus, phenomenology, at its core, is an investigation of the relationship between the researcher's own perspective of reality alongside those expressed by participants. *For example, perhaps the reason why I think it is funny that my parents smelled "paint" from the*

green coffee beans is that my own perception of such—chocolate—was so starkly different. Perhaps the reason I laugh at the descriptions on a bag of coffee beans is because I don't taste anywhere near all of those things. "The task of lifeworld research is thus to investigate the bond between the visible and the invisible, to explore the invisible by using the visible as a point of departure, no matter if the visible and invisible aspects belong to people or things" (Dahlberg et al. 2008, p. 91). Our understanding of reality is always in relation to ourselves. Thus, our understandings of *others'* realities must be consciously held as being understood from our own perspectives as phenomenological researchers.

The authors in Dahlberg et al. (2008) refer to "the relationship between a person and the object or events of her/his experience . . . one's directed awareness of an object or event" as "intentionality" (p. 47). "Intentionality" conceived of this way is less about possessing a desire to do or know something (as the word is typically used in everyday language) and more about the relationships between consciousness and reality that are always present. Dahlberg et al.'s conception of intentionality is consistent with Greene's view of consciousness as an active, thrusting forward of knowing into the world. Intentionality is important to phenomenology because it acknowledges that our experience of reality has meaning to us (in the sense that it *brings meaning to* our perceptions of the world) and our consciousness is always *of something*. Thus, the investigation of humans' experiences of the world are of the utmost importance in phenomenological research.

Thinking Phenomenologically

Dahlberg et al. (2008) draws a distinction between thinking phenomenologically—what Greene would call "wide-awakeness"—and thinking via "the natural attitude," a term first used by Edmund Husserl (1952/1990). "The natural attitude" represents a state of consciousness that

unquestioningly accepts commonplace understandings of reality. Greene uses words such as "submerged," "habitual," and "uncritical" to describe the state of consciousness of a person who goes about their daily life without questioning what they see or think—the opposite of being wide-awake. It is "the everyday immersion in one's existence and experience in which we take for granted that the world is as we perceive it, and that others experience the world as we do" (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 33). The natural attitude rarely acknowledges consciousness as unique and therefore makes little effort to see the world from any other points of view.

When we move throughout the tasks of daily life without questioning the assumptions by which we operate, we are employing the natural attitude; our thinking functions according to accepted social norms and uses of language. For example, when a friend asks you if you'd like to have coffee, you don't typically respond or ponder questions such as, "what does she mean by coffee," "how will we know when we are having 'coffee,' and 'who am I in relation to coffee.'" The natural attitude is efficient in that it allows us to communicate and make decisions as we go about our everyday business. Without being able to operate upon assumptions such as those of language and commonly understood meanings of common words, we would be unable to communicate with others or go about completing the menial but necessary tasks that sustain our existence. This mode of knowing is efficient in that it allows us to take for granted the way we perceive the world in order to continue making progress throughout our days. But it may not allow us to understand the world (or other people) better. The "natural attitude" is a submergence in the everyday—a functional taken-for-granted-ness (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 33).

Thinking phenomenologically, on the other hand, acknowledges that learning anything new requires a *suspension* of the natural attitude. It involves a striving to think deeper by questioning our assumptions and natural ways of knowing—thus the epistemological

underpinnings of phenomenology require researchers to pay attention to and unpack their own ways of knowing and those of their subjects. Through the natural attitude we can be fully immersed in an activity; through phenomenological investigation, we can look at how it is that our consciousness perceives reality in these settings. The purpose of research, then, is to break from the natural attitude: to "see the invisible" and "listen for that which is silent" (p. 39).

Another word that is often used to describe this kind of wide-awake, phenomenological thinking in modern qualitative research is "reflexivity." Phenomenological researchers draw a distinction between "reflection" and "reflexivity" regarding the researcher's role: *reflection* is typically understood as taking a look at oneself and striving to identify what it is that one thinks, believes, values, and knows. *Reflexivity* refers to the ways a researcher examines how and why she thinks, believes, values, and knows what she does. Reflection can be construed as a naming of the natural attitude ("I think this") while reflexivity can be understood as a questioning of the natural attitude ("why do I think this?").

Because reflexivity is a relatively new term in qualitative research, I believe it is appropriate to interpret older writers' use of the word "reflection" as "reflexive" in certain contexts. Both Greene and Dahlberg et al. use the term "reflection" in contexts that implore the researcher to question the assumptions that underpin their thinking (rather than simply to know and name their thinking), which I believe can be interpreted as "reflexive" by the modern reader since it is in line with the ways in which reflexivity is now understood. Miller (2010) points to Greene's concept of wide-awakeness as "a platform from which to actively attend to the development of one's vantage point as a means of becoming more aware of the external world, of diverse others, and of specific injustices" rather than as a "self-absorbed" or "autobiographical" (reflection) exercise (p. 135). Greene's urging that we attend to and challenge

the ways we think in relation to those around us, as discussed by Miller, leads us away from our reflective tendencies and toward those of reflexivity. Dahlberg et al. (2008) write that "reflection" (understood here as "reflexion") helps researchers problematize the natural attitude . . . slacken[ing] the firm, intentional threads that tie us to the world" (p. 128). While we cannot sever the threads of our natural attitudes from our work as researchers, we *can* strive to loosen their hold from having an "uncontrolled effect" on our thinking through reflexive questioning. (p. 128).

Toward "Sensitive Openness" and "Bearing Witness"

In phenomenological research, Dahlberg et al. (2008) support an approach of "sensitive openness" in which researchers strive to move away from seeing life through the natural attitude and begin to see the phenomena more reflexively (p. 96). The authors caution against research designs and analyses that are completely fixed from the beginning; in other words, phenomenological researchers should not attempt to "prove" something they think they already know. Researchers must have an initial interest in the phenomenon and likely have "hunches" as to the meanings they might find, but researchers must pay attention to these preconceptions throughout the study and attempt to set them aside in favor of new understandings throughout the process. Having an open attitude toward phenomenological research means "having the capacity to be surprised and sensitive to the unpredicted and unexpected" (p. 98).

A crucial understanding for Dahlberg et. al (2008) in lifeworld research is that as we consider the phenomenon through the various and unique perspectives of ourselves and our research participants, we "do not make definite what is indefinite'' (p. 122). A commitment in research to "not making definite what is indefinite'' is a commitment to an open attitude toward a phenomenon and a willingness to "let the things show themselves all their multiplicity . . .

horizons, presentations as well as appresentations;" it is a willingness to let the phenomenon "show itself in its own pace and its own way" (p. 122). In this way, lifeworld researchers must not be quick to categorize, label, and theorize about the phenomenon and must remain open to consideration of multiple meanings. A ceramic cup might be considered a vessel in the context that it contains the hot coffee I am currently drinking as I write; it might also be viewed as aesthetic object on my shelf with its dripping, crackled glaze design in my favorite shade of turquoise. It might also serve as an object of nostalgia for my favorite U.S. city with its "I heart NY" etched subtly into the clay. The cup might very well be all of these things at once for me as I lift it closer to my line of sight and inspect its design. "Not making definite what is indefinite" means being able to see the cup as each of these things—a vessel for coffee, a piece of art, a symbol and memory—in their particular contexts, and perhaps even all at once. It means being willing to be conscious of phenomena in new ways.

The authors also resist the term, "method" to describe their version of phenomenological inquiry—Reflective Lifeworld Research—and view "openness" as "antithesis to method;" they maintains that the research design can and should be adjusted when necessary, rather than being limited by routines or procedures (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 111). Openness means that researchers "must have patience to wait for the phenomenon to reveal its own complexity rather than imposing an external structure on it, such as the dogmatic use of theories or models" (p. 112). Phenomenological lifeworld research assumes that while the researcher should possess a firm grasp of the theories and research centered around the phenomenon, she must also be committed to suspending this knowledge in favor of new phenomenological meaning.

Dahlberg et al.'s (2008) concept of "sensitive openness" also resembles Hansen's (2017) conceptualization of "bearing witness" in classrooms and what Bocher and Ellis (2016) refer to

as “compassionate witnessing” in research. The mode of engagement enacted by a researcher-as-witness in ethnographic and educational spaces is built on the assumption that “it is worthwhile to listen to teachers and spend time in their classrooms” (Hansen, 2017, p. 12). With this understanding in mind, the researcher-as-witness strives to embody interactive postures with research contexts in ways that (a) honor the unique specificity of individual teaching contexts (what Maxine Greene called “seeing school large”), (b) resist categories, judgements, generalizations, and explanations, (c) attend to the human relationships present in teaching communities through interactions with the research environment that emphasize ethics and care (Bochner and Ellis 2016). The researcher-as-witness both acknowledges and celebrates their embeddedness in the research context while also maintaining a distanced (but not detached) presence out of respect for the intimacy of teaching contexts. The researcher-as-witness prioritizes “receptivity” than “objectivity,” “experiences” over “explanations,” and “relationships” over “rationales.”

Researchers who identify with a witness-oriented approach in their work often represent their relationship to data with “journey metaphors” (Berman, 1998; Dustin & Ziegler, 2007; Hansen, 2017; Styres, 2019). Hansen (2017) draws a distinction between data collection and analysis processes of a researcher-as-witness in contrast with that of a “researcher-as-scientist” through a metaphor of walking through the woods. The scientist, Hansen suggests, moves about the woods in search of specific creatures and foliage, waiting for the appearances of such with a readied camera, notepad, or instrument to capture the scene—gleaning new knowledge and answering through examination, previously unanswered questions. Conversely, the witness walks through the same woods in the anticipation (but not predetermination) of an interesting discovery; the witness prepares to be surprised as they walk, taking note of what they see, and

wondering what will come next. “Journeying,” which is the process of the witness as they walk through the woods, “is a process of coming to know,” Styres (2019) suggests. “It is essentially learning through the chaos of moving from the familiar through to the unfamiliar while maintaining and observing a reflective frame of mind” (p. 29). While the researcher-as-scientist might set out to gather specific forms of knowledge and information from their walk, the researcher-as-witness enters the woods with an attitude of openness and receptivity, ready to experience that which the woods naturally present to the walker, expectantly waiting for meaning to present itself. Berman (1998) suggests that it is presence of this kind of open yet expectant posture in Maxine Greene’s writing and thinking: “Although she journeys with us through the darkness, she has the rare capacity to help us see the light. She has the brilliance of mind to meander with us through fields of ideas, yet she has the moral sense to point the beacon toward what matters” (p. 171).

How then are we to remain reflexive and open in our approach while also contributing to the field of research in a meaningful way? In other words, what are the non-negotiable aspects of phenomenological lifeworld research that researchers must adhere to while striving to be open? First, researchers must also possess a firm grasp of the phenomenon itself. The phenomenon itself is not what is under investigation, but rather the *meanings* people form in relation to this phenomenon. Harkening back to coffee, perhaps the phenomenon, itself, is the Kenyan coffee beans I roasted and used to make coffee this morning. I might define the phenomenon by stating that the green beans came from the Kiambu Fram Farm just outside of Nairobi, that they were roasted for twelve minutes to the degree of a “light roast,” that they were ground to a medium-fine coarseness, and brewed with the pour over method at a ratio of 27 grams of coffee per 350 ml of water at 200 degrees. Once the phenomenon has been defined, the phenomenological

meanings of those who experience the phenomenon take the center stage of the phenomenological exploration.

Second, and most importantly, lifeworld researchers must strive to describe and interpret phenomenological data in ways that are consistent with phenomenological epistemology: the aim is to understand, clarify, and be open to the unique meanings people create around a given phenomenon, including the meanings experienced and expressed by participants *as they are interpreted and experienced* by the researcher. Perhaps I invite a few friends over to drink the Kenyan coffee with me over a weekend brunch; I might ask them how they liked the coffee, what flavors they tasted, how they perceived the roast in relation to their preferences for light and dark roasts. Perhaps I might observe their facial expressions upon drinking the coffee, or make note of how many cups they drank. I would also take into consideration my own thoughts of the coffee and of the way my own coffee preferences might impact *my* characterizations of *theirs*. At the end of the brunch, the phenomenological meanings I might come away with have to do my own perceptions of their experiences of the coffee (not what the coffee actually *is*).

Reflective Lifeworld Research: A Bridling of Phenomenological Traditions

Modern phenomenological research methods typically stem from either the descriptive or hermeneutic traditions (Vagle, 2018). Although situated in epistemologically similar ways, descriptive phenomenology (Husserl) and interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger) part ways regarding the ways in which the researcher interacts with the data. In the descriptive, Husserlian phenomenological tradition, the researcher strives to understand her own natural attitude (prior experience and consciousness) toward the phenomenon so that she can set it aside ("epoché") to describe, present, and understand the data without judgment. Interpretive (Heideggerian) phenomenologists assume the inseparability of one's own consciousness with the

data and instead advocate for a careful interpreting and presenting of the data. Both phenomenological perspectives acknowledge and advocate for attention to be paid to the researcher's own consciousness of the phenomenon throughout the research process, but the researcher role and the presentation of data are dealt with differently by each tradition.

Dahlberg et al. (2008) understands the researcher's role in phenomenology as "movement between the interpreter's past and present in which understanding and creation of meaning emerge incrementally as the back and forth process takes place between parts and the whole" (p. 77). This moving back and forth between parts and the whole as well as the researcher's experience and the participants perceived experiences with the phenomenon mark Dahlberg et al.'s concept of "bridling"—a tightening and slackening of the "reins" on the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon throughout the research process. Bridling acknowledges the value of restraining one's prior understandings of the phenomenon during stages of the research process while also advocating for the researcher to carefully interpret her data through utilization of her own experience throughout the process. Bridling allows for both the suspension and incorporation of the researcher's relationship to the phenomenon at different points in the study.

The concept of bridling is Dahlberg et al.'s (2008) contribution to the descriptive vs. interpretive phenomenological debate within phenomenology. Through their acknowledgement of both description and interpretation as being aspects of the researcher role, the authors advocate for both an employment and restraint of the researcher's own experience of the phenomenon throughout the process; bridling represents a methodological turn from binary, either/or approaches to phenomenology (either we bracket our experience *or* we use it to interpret the phenomenon) and toward an approach that is open to both researcher roles when necessary throughout the research process.

Bridling serves to account for researchers' pre-understanding as well as the need to understand phenomena as a whole. To the extent that they seek to question and problematize their preconceived ideas about the phenomenon, researchers "tighten the reins" on their own understandings in order to remain open to the phenomenological meanings that are presented in data collection. To the end that they strive to take into account the whole of their experience with the phenomenon, researchers slacken the reins on their understanding and consider aspects of the phenomenon such as the current literature around it. "Researchers should practice a disciplined kind of interaction and communication with their phenomena . . . so that they do not understand too quickly, too carelessly" as to "not make definite what is indefinite" (p. 130). Bridling acknowledges that "researchers are also part of the same world as the one they are investigating" (p. 131). Bridling is both an intentional restraining (tightening of the reins) and interpreting (slackening of the reins) of the researcher's knowledge throughout the research process which will be discussed further in the data analysis section.

Part Two: Doing Phenomenology: Listening for Sounds of Striving

I return once again to a woman whose unfinished story has captivated me along with much of America atop the New York Times bestseller list; a politician who strove to use her positioning to advocate for children's health and LGBT rights; a lawyer who refused stop looking for meaning in her work, even when it meant taking a substantial pay cut or decrease in prestige; a thinker who, like Greene, rejects seeing herself as "having become" a set of fixed identities; a woman who used to be a girl and "straight-A student" who grew up on the south side of Chicago above her great-aunt's piano studio; above all, my dissertation is about "listening to the sounds of striving" (Obama, 2018, p. 1).

I am interested in teachers—like the Youtube piano teacher—who endeavor to re-imagine their classrooms and curricula; teachers who value openness, creativity, play, and the musicality children bring with them to our classrooms from the very beginning. I'm curious to see how students—like Kai—think and respond in these musical settings, and in how they choose to contribute; students who, like young Michelle Obama, challenge our teaching norms and methods, demanding that we consider other curricular alternatives. I want to consciously attend to and empathize with the challenges students and teachers face as they struggle through the adversities and work toward accommodations; I want to listen for the sounds of striving from music teachers and students who see themselves and their musical lives as becoming.

The phenomenon in this study consists of three music teachers who, in Greene's words, have begun to "re-capture" me as a music educator and researcher. They are three teachers who are committed to questioning and re-thinking their practices, strive to meet the needs of their students, and are willing to make changes to the ways their classes are structured in order to do such. They are three teachers who set aside time from the demands of their schedules to speak with me; three teachers who welcomed me into their classrooms when there was nothing directly to be gained; three teachers whom I respect and have striven to travel alongside as a researcher throughout the four months of my data collection. They are teachers who, as I will discuss in my final chapter, act on a great deal of courage in their day-to-day teaching lives; they are music teachers who give me hope.

I am searching for resonances between my own becoming and the becomings of my participants. I am seeking to understand the ways these teachers and students perceive the re-imagining of their own musical selves; I am striving to reflexively make meaning of the way our strivings might seem to coalesce.

Participants and Setting

Each of the three participants teaches at PreK-12 schools in rural, upstate New York. Marc's school is the smallest with about 300 students total and 25 students per grade; Greg's school is about twice this size, and Charlie's school is the largest of the three with around 1,500 students. The racial demographics of both Marc's and Greg's schools are made up of almost 100% White students. Charlie's school population, however, is 63% Native American (most of whom live on a nearby reservation), 31.5% White, 4% Multiracial, and 1.5% Latinx. While I would very much have liked to include at least one music teacher participant who identifies as a woman in this study, my participant sampling was limited the area where I resided at the time; unfortunately, none of the woman music teachers I contacted were able to participate.

Marc

Marc came to my attention as a potential participant at the recommendation of a university colleague on account of the inquisitiveness that had occasionally prompted him to seek advice from my colleague over the years. Marc's questions, I was told, often revolved around ways to make music curriculum more relevant for his students, especially in relation to the state-run music activities that presided over many of the music programs at nearby schools. Thinking fondly back to the story of young Michelle Obama and her disdain for Robbie's method book piano lessons, my interest in Marc as a person who was potentially unafraid of challenging dominant practices in music education was piqued. I also learned from my colleague that Marc was the only Black music director (to his knowledge) in the region and that he had been teaching at his current school for quite some time. After receiving an introduction email from my colleague regarding my dissertation work, Marc's initial correspondence to me (without having met me before) was one of openness and hospitality: "We are working to change our

music department to a modern, student-centered environment … I am very interested to learn about your work and offer our small program as a place to explore, challenge, and develop any ideas that will ultimately benefit our kids."

I met Marc in person for the first time at his school, and upon beginning our conversation, it was clear to me that Marc had much to say. The preliminary conversation that I'd imagined would take 20-30 minutes and covered the aims of my study as well as a bit about Marc's own teaching and context lasted over an hour; I was at once struck by how thoughtfully and articulately Marc expressed himself, his ideas around teaching music, and the ways he cared for his students. I left the school feeling a buzzy excitement toward the prospect of learning more from this man and his students, and although I'd relayed to Marc that I didn't need a commitment to participation yet, he assured me that he was ready to welcome me to his classroom. Among the many things Marc spoke about that interested me, I was especially intrigued by the way he viewed his own role as "music teacher" at the school. Marc explained to me that while he had originally been hired as a K-12 "vocal music teacher" to teach in tandem with a K-12 "instrumental music teacher," he had later advocated for a restructuring of the music teaching duties so that he could be the 7-12 *music teacher*. Now in this 30th year of teaching, Marc expressed to me that this distinction between "vocal music teacher" and "music teacher" was important to him in that it seemed to afford a greater diversity of music making in his classroom.

Another aspect of my conversation with Marc that provided initial intrigue for me was the way his classes were currently structured. Marc explained to me that as of this school year, the majority of his classes were no longer labeled as "band" or "choir," but as "emerging ensembles," a change that was inspired by a presentation he attended of his regional music

colleagues. Marc's schedule consisted of one band and one choir for 7th and 8th graders, two "Studio Vox" acapella ensembles, and six class periods titled "Emerging Ensemble 1" (2, 3, etc.). Each of these "emerging ensembles" is comprised of both singers and instrumentalists, the latter of which included a variety of acoustic and electric instruments, as well as string and wind instruments. The daily task for each of these "emerging ensembles" was to figure out what they wanted to play and how they were going to do it.

As he alluded to in his initial email, Marc is a teacher who is striving to foster relevance in his classes through helping his students explore a variety of musical genres. Through the emerging ensembles set up, he described the various styles some of his students were working toward, including one group that was working on an Earth, Wind, and Fire setlist. Marc also acknowledged the beginning steps that he perceives the profession of music education is taking toward the inclusion of multicultural traditions as a step forward for the profession; he also added that many of the multicultural music teaching resources he has encountered focus on the inclusion of music from other countries—West African drumming, for example. He recognized that while he views these as important perspectives in the music curriculum, that there many musical cultures *within* the United States worth exploring, pointing distinct places such as Miami, New Orleans, and Harlem as having distinct musical traditions with African ties that might play a meaningful role in a school's music curriculum. Marc, himself, is also an active jazz and Blues performer.

Greg

I initially reached out to Greg upon Marc's recommendation; Greg was the teacher who had presented on the "emerging ensembles" model that had inspired Marc to restructure his music classes. In response to my introductory email, Greg wrote, "Your description of teachers

who see themselves as becoming … resonates in a fairly profound way with me, as that is very much a way that I might aspire to describe the teacher that I hope to be." The humility in Greg's description of himself seemed to embody an ethos of Greene in a way that compelled me to continue pursuing him as a potential participant.

I met Greg at his school—the furthest of my three research locations—shortly after our initial correspondence. Our conversation took place in the brief space of time that existed between the end of a full school day and a series of evening musical theater rehearsals; I was grateful that Greg was willing to share this brief respite with me amidst his numerous professional responsibilities. Before we began discussing the study, Greg said (I am paraphrasing from memory), "I just have to show you this before we start talking because it's on my mind," and slid his cell phone to me across the table. "This is one of my former students and one of my son's closest friends from high school: he's on stage singing back-up for Billy Eilish" (during the 2020 Grammy Awards the night before). "Wow," I remarked, "That's amazing!" especially (I thought) considering how rural the school was—nowhere near New York City or anywhere remotely connected to "show business." Still glowing, Greg explained that he had known this student well, partly on account of his musical enthusiasm, and partly because of the student's friendship with his son. I got the sense that I was witnessing something quite personal—how often do we K-12 teachers have the opportunity to hear from our students later in life in ways that might be even tangentially connected to the learning they did in our classrooms?

As we discussed my dissertation work, I started to feel that Greg was interviewing me just as much as I was interviewing him—not in an affrontive or interrogative way, but in a manner that suggested he was protective of his students and their time together in the classroom. Would I be a person he was comfortable talking with? Was I someone who would approach his

teaching and students with judgement? Although I had originally suggested a phone conversation in my introductory email to him (on account of his school being a substantial drive from where I lived), it was important to Greg that our first interaction be face-to-face; he even offered quite generously to meet me halfway. Sensing that this initial in-person conversation was important to him, I met Greg at his school without hesitation. At one point in the conversation, Greg also asked me what a qualitative observation of his classroom might look like in my dissertation; he seemed to be feeling out the kinds of things I might observe and write about while in his classroom. As an example, I offered that perhaps I might remark on an invitation Greg had extended to his students to participate in repertoire selection during a particular rehearsal I had observed, since this was a topic that had already come up several times in our current conversation.

After we had discussed both my research aims and his teaching context, Greg expressed his interest in working together, particularly with regard to having someone as a sounding board for new ideas about the kinds of musical ends he was trying to work toward with his students. “If you think my babbling on about teaching music is going to be useful to your study, then by all means, let’s continue this” he added with a humorous, self-deprecating sensibility, “There aren’t many people who want to hear about the daily challenges of teaching music here.” But then his tone became more serious: “Like I said, if you think this is useful, then great. But I do worry that you won’t see enough of what you’re looking for.” When I asked Greg to clarify what he meant by this, he told me that while he considers himself to be a teacher who is continually growing, changing, and thinking about how to meet his students’ needs better, he hadn’t “produced” any final products. “If you’re looking for “successful models” of teaching music or new approaches that really work well, I don’t think you’ll find that here.”

It pained me to hear Greg reflect on his teaching this way as I thought about how our data- and performance-driven cultural views toward education had permeated his choice of words. I was talking with someone who clearly cared a great deal about his students and their musical lives, yet the oppressive rhetoric of our measurement-obsessed culture seemed to be weighing on him heavily. I tried to assure Greg as much as I could that I wasn't looking for any "final products" or "measurable results." I reiterated that I was interested in and committed to the idea of teachers as becoming in my research: "I just want to be a part of the conversation and the struggle," I offered, "in what ways I can, if it is okay with you." This sentiment seemed to put Greg at ease for the time being, at least, as his tone and facial expression warmed again. Greg walked me to the school's parking lot entrance after our conversation came to an end and then he reiterated his interest in my work, thanked me (again) for making the drive, and for considering his music program as a potential research setting.

Charlie

Charlie is younger—both in age and in teaching experience—than Greg and Marc. He is a fourth-year teacher at his second school placement and was a few credits away from completing his master's degree in music education during the data collection. Like Marc, Charlie was recommended to me by a university colleague who knew a bit about Charlie's teaching context and values; Charlie was a person whom my colleague thought would be receptive to the idea of "becoming" as it related to his teaching identity. In response to my introductory email, Charlie had surprised me with his enthusiasm: "Thank you so much for reaching out! I think this is a wonderful opportunity. I would love to be able to chat about this project with you!" Again, I felt privileged to receive such a warm reception as a researcher from someone who had never even met me. I wondered how I might have reacted if approached by a researcher in Charlie's

situation; I wondered what might be exciting about the prospect of having a researcher in his classroom.

Charlie teaches middle and high school choirs, middle school general music classes and high school vocal lessons. When I met him in his classroom at the conclusion of the school day, I could hear trumpets practicing in an adjacent room and our conversation was interrupted on a few occasions by students enquiring about the availability of rehearsal spaces. He apologized for the inconvenience and eventually gave one student his ring of keys along with instructions for their use. I began the conversation with some introductory information about the scope of my study—a brief description of some of Greene's ideas (some of which he was familiar with), the type of data I planned to collect, and a general timeline for the project. Charlie informed me that teachers in his school were accustomed to having researchers around, due to the number of universities in the area.

After sharing some of my own information as a researcher, I asked Charlie if he would tell me a bit about his current teaching situation. What surprised and intrigued me was that instead of beginning with the specific classes he teaches and their various categorizations (as I might have done in his place), he began by describing the students, themselves. "I don't know if you know or not," he began, "But this school is right by the Native American territory, so the majority of our student population lives on the reservation." Although I'd known vaguely of the reservation territory, I hadn't realized this group made up such a sizable portion of the school demographic. Unprompted, Charlie began telling me about the cultural tensions that played out on a daily basis in his classroom, which likely accounted for his being the fifth music teacher these students had known in the recent past. He hadn't understood, Charlie told me, the extent to

which the history of conflict between his Native American students and his White students would influence the way he taught music before taking the job.

Charlie told me that at the start of the semester, he had reached out to the Native American community and connected with a respected, elder musician from the tribe. Since then, he had invited her to several of his middle school choir rehearsals to help the group learn a few pieces of music from their Native American tradition. From Charlie's perspective, this effort toward bringing a culture bearer into the choral classroom had been meaningful for his Native American students; he had perceived a level of engagement from these students that he had not seen before and was also enjoying learning about a musical tradition that had been formerly unknown to him. His White students and their parents, on the other hand, had expressed a strong adversity to this musical engagement with Native American culture. Charlie now seemed to find himself at the center of a conflict that extended far beyond his classroom, yet presented itself in the form of hostile student interactions on a daily basis. "At the end of the day," Charlie said (which I am paraphrasing from my own memory), "I'm a White boy from a small town like many of these students too." And yet it was clear to me that Charlie cared a *lot* about his place in this conflict, and that he was striving to understand and meet his students' needs in the space they shared together that was the music classroom.

At one point in the conversation, Charlie alluded to being unsure about whether or not he would continue teaching music for the duration of his career, in spite of being almost finished with his master's degree. When I followed up on this later, he clarified that while he wasn't looking to change careers any time soon, he simply wasn't sure if he could see himself doing this job long term. "It's not all bad," he said, contrasting his current teaching facilities to those of his former school: "I have a nice classroom, instruments for my students to use, and a supportive

administration." Yet figuring out "how" and "what" to teach, given the cultural divide between his students, seemed to take up the majority of his thinking about music education.

Charlie reiterated his enthusiasm toward being a part of my study at the close of our conversation, provided that I understood teaching there was "kind of a struggle." I thanked Charlie for his time in talking with me and assured him that I was interested in learning more about teaching music in this context from him and his students.

Data Collection

Dahlberg et al. (2008) problematize the idea of the terminology "data gathering" on account of its implications that data is objective information "out there in the world" waiting to be plucked like flowers (p. 172). There are always choices to be made by the researcher, regardless whether or not they are made explicit: Which flowers will be picked? By whom? For what purposes? Why these and not those? To leave the intentions and interpretations of the data gatherer unexamined in the collection process is to negate the individuality of her consciousness. Instead, I view my role in this research as being more akin to that of a photographer than a florist, capturing snapshots of an array of flowers that are of interest to me, each from a variety of angles, and in varying degrees of lighting. When I re-examine these photographs in the chapters that follow, I ask myself, "Why did I take the photo this way? What about it captured my interest? Which aspects of the flowers did my photos prioritize and what might I have left out?"

As I strove to capture and interpret these moments of meaning from a variety of angles, I did so with the intention of maintaining a close proximity, of "seeing things big" (Greene, 1995, p. 10). "To see things [or people] big," Greene suggests, "is to regard the world and mankind as something great, glorious, and significant;" to "see things or people small," in contrast, is "to see

from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life" (Greene, 1995, p. 10). Seeing data small, it is the footage from a drone, flying high above a field of sunflowers; perhaps it is a record of their geographic location, measurements of the field size, an acknowledgement of the terrain in which they grow. Seeing big means using a zoom lens to capture the various angles of a daffodil, up close and with a degree of intimacy and familiarity. It suggests that people—teachers and students—make meaning in ways that are not easily quantifiable or directly observable; that depth of meaning must be sought purposefully and openly; that peculiarities and individualities are worth getting to know.

In an effort to capture some of these moments of meaning, up close and purposefully, I used a variety of data collection strategies including a research journal, classroom observations, and open-ended interviews with participants throughout my study. Woven throughout the stories I tell of the photographs I collected, I have striven to attend to my own presence as the researcher and outsider, through which I will strive to think and interpret my perceptions reflexively.

In *Releasing the Imagination,* Greene introduces a dichotomy between what she calls "seeing big" and "seeing small." Seeing small is looking at education from a birds eye view—analyzing trends and behaviors, striving toward standardization and accountability, focusing on procedures and measurable results (Greene, 1995, pp. 10-11). To see school small is to be focused on the system and remain detached from the humans who populate them. To see small is to prioritize generalized principles over context-specific knowledge. Seeing school big, however, is focusing on each unique student and self-constructed consciousness of reality. Seeing school (and people) big means seeing students as ends in themselves rather than as means to a larger goal or outcome. For teachers and researchers, seeing school big is a call "to reflect upon [our]

practice[s] within a complex context . . . and to open [ourselves] to descriptions of the whole" (Greene, 1995, p. 12). In collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting my data throughout this study, I strove to remain committed to seeing people and contexts "big"—to view the information communicated by my participants as contextually-based without generalizing, and to avoid cross-case analyses both in my formal analysis of the data and in my own, conscious perception of such.

Interviews

For Dahlberg et al. (2008), interviews serve the primary purpose of exploring participants' lived experiences through conversational storytelling. Rather than "answer questions," the authors advocate that participants be encouraged to recount memories and share experiences (p. 184). They suggest that reflective lifeworld research interviews might be thought of as "collaboratively produced narratives" that employ unequal amounts of collaboration on the part of the interviewer and interviewee: the researcher strives to be present with the participant and contribute only as much as is needed to help draw the interviewee into expressing and articulating their own understandings.

As an extension of the openness that is integral to phenomenological lifeworld research, the authors advocate for an open approach to interviews with participants to the greatest extent possible. Dahlberg et al. (2008) provide several structural characteristics of interviews that embody openness: (a) one carefully crafted opening question, (b) a non-prescribed format, and (c) a series of follow-up questions according to the direction the interviewee seems to be headed throughout their participation. While the researcher is responsible for beginning the conversation with an opening question and directing the conversation with follow-up questions, she must also be sensitive to the path she perceives the interviewee is taking. The authors urge that researchers

should always strive to "move toward the unexpected, the unknown, and unreflected, in order to reflect in a new way and come closer to the phenomenon" (p. 192). Interviews should be structured enough to relate to the phenomenon, but flexible enough to allow the participants to share what they think and choose as most valuable.

Interviews served as the primary format in which I was able to engage with these music teachers throughout the study. A few preliminary topics I wanted to explore in the first few interviews were participants' perceptions of (a) Their musicianship and musical development, (b) Their becomings as teachers, and (c) Their teaching contexts (and what they might want me to know about such). After discussing some of these initial topics with teachers, our conversations shifted to the more specific, context-based topics, ideas, and moments chosen by participants—particularly ones related to classes I had the opportunity to observe. These discussions often involved topics I did not plan to cover, as you will see in in Greg's (Chapter VI) discussion of "rigor" and "engagement," for example. Through striving to remain open to manifestations of phenomenological meaning, I invited participants in these interviews to bring the topics they also felt were important to our conversations.

Field Observations

"Field," for Dahlberg et al. (2008), consists of the social context in which a group of individuals are connected; it is imperative, by this view, that lifeworld researchers understand and are aware of "meaning as something that belongs to its context" (p. 220). The authors suggest that research conducted through observations of people in social contexts can be informative in different ways than interviews in that they allow the researcher to experience the phenomenon through directly observing (and sometimes being a part of) the actions and decisions of the people, themselves. Field observations provide a setting for researchers to

experience and interpret phenomenological meaning as more directly connected to a particular context than in other research approaches, such that researchers "gain access to information that may never have been revealed in an interview" (p. 212).

I strove to navigate my role in the field observations with a posture of openness and receptivity toward the specific contexts—schools and individual classes—in which I entered. When I visited some of Marc's larger classes, he invited me to walk around the room and talk with students throughout their work time; Greg similarly invited me to trade choruses in an improvisation session with one of his guitarists the next time I came to campus (which unfortunately never ended up happening due to the COVID-19 school shutdowns). In each of the teacher's smaller classes and lesson groups (including Charlie's general music classes), I preferred to distance myself more from the students, cautious of my presence as an imposition in these smaller, more intimate settings. And in Charlie's middle school choir rehearsal (stories of which I will tell you in Chapter V), the room was so full of bodies and backpacks that I could barely move as I huddled at Charlie's desk, trying to take in as much as could.

Research Journal

A research journal in phenomenological research serves to guide researchers through a process of actively interpreting phenomenological meaning and questioning their thinking through reflexivity. It is a way in which researchers can engage in consciously becoming aware of their own positioning toward the phenomenon; it is a way of thinking about and questioning the ways they perceive phenomenological meaning in their data. Dahlberg et al. (2008) outline a set of questions that can be helpful as the researcher proceeds through the data collection process and interprets phenomenological meaning: (a) What has been my experience of this phenomenon? (b) What do I know or do I not know about it? (c) What is it that I want to know?

(d) How is my way of understanding? (e) Am I too quick in making decisions about what I see? (f) Is it hard for me to be surprised? (p. 177). The personal research journal can serve as both a mode of data collection in reflective lifeworld research as well as a way of consciously questioning phenomenological meaning interpreted by the researcher; in this way, the researcher journal functions both methodologically and epistemologically throughout the study.

My research journal highlights some of my engagement in the data throughout the study; it depicts some of the ways my own consciousness—unique, incomplete, and ever-changing—is threaded throughout my engagement in field observations and interview conversations with participants. In some ways, the content of my research journal is similar to my field observations in that they both account for my own perspective on the data. However, through the use of bridling, the ways I approached the observations and research journal was different. Through tightening the reins on my own understandings during field observations, I strove to focus my notes on descriptions rather than interpretations to allow for more openness in how I initially perceived the data. Then in my research journal after the observations, I will loosened the reins on my own understandings and allowed myself to more purposefully interpret the data from my field observations and interview conversations. As I began to review the observations and interview conversations during the initial stages of my data analysis, I often found myself reflecting on the data in ways that were similar to how I had reflected in my researcher journal; some of these more interpretive and reflective "notes on notes" also became part of what constituted my "researcher journal."

Timeline and Frequency

I collected data over the course of four months, February-May 2020, rotating between my three settings and participants as equitably as possible. While my original research design

consisted of equal parts classroom observations and interview conversations with teachers, the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide school closings which began mid-March 2020 necessitated a more heavily-weighted shift toward interview data. Fortunately, I was able to meet each teacher in his classroom twice before schools closed, wherein I collected about one school day's worth of classroom observations, about five different classes per teacher. After schools in the state of New York closed, I continued to conduct a series of interviews with the three teachers through May, as their schedules allowed. In total, I spoke with each participant in 3-4 separate interview sessions, each of which lasted around 60-90 minutes.

Analysis

In viewing each of my research settings as unique, contextually-bound units of phenomenological meaning, I have striven, first and foremost, to see these contexts "big" in a way that respects their particularities and situatedness. Phenomenological research, in contrast to a multiple case-study analysis, is about individual manifestations of meaning, rather than cross-case comparisons of themes. To this end, it was important that each of my research settings be understood and presented in its own specificity and uniqueness. I present my data in three discrete chapters: stories of Marc (Chapter IV), stories of Charlie (Chapter V), and stories of Greg (Chapter VI).

In working backward from this goal, I approached my analysis of each chapter context with the "whole-part-whole" process that is common in phenomenological research (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 236). To write Marc's chapter, for example, I began by listening to the "whole" of my data related to Marc: I listened to each of our recorded interview conversations, and read through my field observations, notes, and researcher journal. In this first pass through the data, I made a conscious effort to tighten the reins on my own perceptions of and reactions to what I

heard and read; in an effort to remain open to the stories Marc told in our interviews and enacted in his teaching, I tried to refrain from consciously connecting academic literature and scholarly understandings to what I heard—to prioritize and strive to understand the stories Marc told from his own perspective, thus engaging in more descriptive (Husserlian) phenomenological practices.

After my initial pass through the whole of Marc's data, I began another, but this time I did a closer reading: I listened to our interview conversations again and reviewed my field notes and researcher journal, taking notes on what I heard and read, consciously reflecting in the margins of these documents. Some of these notes summarized events in Marc's stories, while others wondered about a central idea that might be connected to such; some notes posed questions, while others simply highlighted phrases that seemed important. In my third pass through Marc's data, I began compiling quotes, passages, and observations that seemed related. Then I passed through the compiled quotes and possible themes again, organizing them into groups of "stories" and identified a quote of Marc's to serve as a "title" for each story. Then I wrote a descriptive narrative—stories of becoming—for Marc's data.

After constructing Marc's narrative of stories woven together (and re-reading what I wrote), I loosened the reins on my researcher role and began to engage in more interpretive (Heiddeger) phenomenological work: I re-read the work of scholars whose work spoke to the stories I had written about Marc, making note of passages and ideas that seemed to resonate with Marc's stories. I also began to think more about my own stories of becoming; I re-read the stories I wrote about Marc and wrote some of my own stories of becoming alongside Marc's in places that seemed to fit. I also went in search of new authors based on the ideas that surfaced in my stories of Marc—authors whose work I did not encounter in my first attempt to create a literature review for this project, because I did not know what stories Marc was going to tell me.

Throughout the storying process, I continued to read and re-read Maxine Greene's works in this new context of Marc's stories; I found often that new passages resonated in ways they had not in my initial reading. Marc's stories illuminated much of what I read of Greene, and in turn, Greene's stories shaped the way I thought about and re-narrated Marc's stories. The "Chapter IV" that you will read next is a blending of becoming stories: Marc's, mine, Greene's, and others.

In my final chapter, I return to the "whole" in a discussion of storytelling, becoming, resonance, and courage as they have enlarged my understanding of the lived lives of music teachers in my dissertation.

Interlude

ENSTORIED "FINDINGS"

The following three chapters represent the "findings" of my dissertation data collection in the form of stories: stories of Marc, Greg, Charlie, and me—stories of our becomings as music teachers. I describe them as "findings" in quotations because they differ in several ways from the content that is typically considered to be such in a qualitative dissertation. Bochner and Ellis (2016) suggest that storied portrayals of data, such as those I offer in Chapters 4-6 of this document, "transgresses the old ways of judging the merits of a social 'scientific' argument" and "directs attention to meanings rather than facts, readings rather than observations, and interpretations rather than findings" (p. 239). Rather than providing generalizations or thematized findings, these stories are intended to give you, Reader, a glimpse of the teaching lives of Marc, Charlie, and Greg as individuals who teach in unique contexts. In striving to remain faithful to this end and to Maxine Greene's call to view teaching and teachers "large," I resisted cross-case analysis between stories relayed to me by each of these educators. I strove to maintain the structural integrity of a chapter focused on each individual and his unique teaching situation. It was also my intention, through these stories, to give you a sense of the kinds of relationships I formed with each of my participants—how their becomings and mine became intertwined throughout our conversations and interactions—places where I experienced resonance, dissonance, curiosity, and fascination in conversation with the stories these teachers told.

Throughout these stories you will read aspects of both phenomenological description—what I saw and heard—and interpretation—what I felt and thought in the context of authors

whose work seemed to resonate with and make sense of Marc's, Charlie's, and Greg's stories. And while I did not set out to offer interpretations that reach across the three men and their stories of becoming music teachers, each chapter emphasizes several larger themes of storytelling—the kinds of striving I sought to listen for and tell stories about: (a) malleable (though not relativistic) conceptions of the "self" as becoming; (b) the centrality of teachers' identities to their roles in and practices of teaching; and (c) complexity present in each person's unique teaching context.

Malleable Concepts of Self

To view our teaching selves as becoming is to commit to ideas of growth, change, and improvement—verbs such as "growing," "changing," and "striving." To view ourselves as becoming is to resist stagnant, deterministic identities—"I was born this way"—in favor of identities that shift and stretch in response to the world through which we move: "I know who I was … but I think I must have been changed several times since then" (Alice, reflecting on her journey in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865/2011, p. 7). And yet for Maxine Greene, to "become" is not to live a life of flitting from one identity to the next nor does it embody a value of change simply for the sake of such.

In recent U.S. politics, Georgia senator Marjorie Taylor Greene was publicly confronted by the House of Representatives over her self-proclaimed QAnon membership and conspiratorial beliefs that the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks and U.S. school shootings were fabricated events. In response to being called to account for her statements by the House of Representatives, Marjorie Taylor Greene responded, "These were words of the past and these things do not represent me [now] … they do not represent my values [now]" (Taylor Greene,

2021). Yet many of these values, identities, and "words of the past" were espoused and publicly proclaimed by Taylor Greene only a few months before a nationwide controversy ensued. And while both "Maxine" and "Marjorie" ironically share the same last name, their views around a person's capacity to change stand in stark contrast.

Becoming, for Maxine Greene, is the process of awakening to the lived experiences of others—of reaching for meaning through empathetic dialogue, of striving to see the world from another person's vantage—and in turn, beginning to see oneself in the world differently. Maxine's "becoming" holds equity, freedom, and justice as ends toward which we should strive to turn. Marjorie's invocation of a "former self" is merely a refusal to take responsibility for her past actions. I do not want to belabor this point nor do I want Marjorie Taylor Greene to occupy any more space in this document than what makes up these two paragraphs; I do wish to suggest, however, that becoming is a deeper, more serious transformation than sentiments such as, "I was X but now am Y." To become is to change in relation to people and contexts, and to begin seeing the world anew because others have showed us what life is like from their vantage points—because what we are becoming is in service to notions of equity, freedom, and justice for those with whom we reside.

The identities of Greg, Marc, Charlie, and myself present themselves as malleable in the chapters to come—not in the sense that we "are" whatever we will ourselves to "be" at a given moment, but in gesturing toward the idea that these stories emphasize change and growth in response to the unique contexts in which we are embedded as teachers. Sociologist Thomas Turino's (2008) concept of the self as a "constellation of habits" suggests our identities are made up of patterns of consistency *and* breakages from such: "The repetitiousness of habits offers a high degree of stability and continuity to living, yet as in the process of life, with each repetition

there is the potential for growth or change" (p. 101). Throughout my interactions with Marc, Charlie, and Greg, I sought to gain insight around aspects of these teachers' identities that have persisted throughout their becomings as musicians and teachers, and those that have undergone change and restructuring. *Which habits in the constellations of these teachers' selves have persisted, shining brightly in the skies of their vocational lives? Which habits have become more dim, or perhaps connected to networks of other patterns and images?*

In the stories of Marc's becoming, for example, I narrate what I see as a recurring habit in Marc's musicianship and teaching: his value for and active fostering of musical situations where people can be musical by learning in communion. As a child, Marc learned that being musical was a highly social endeavor—a learning alongside and in specific contexts, rather than in the isolation of a practice room. As a teacher, Marc actively works toward fostering similar kinds of experiences for his students that prioritize "making music together"—a value I have come to see as a recurring habit in Marc's identity. Conversely, a habit in the constellation of Marc's musical self that has undergone a great deal of change and restructuring is his relationship with symbolic Western music notation. In Marc's chapter, I narrate conflicting stories of "sound before sight," guitar method books, and tape recorders to demonstrate how Marc's value for notation changes as he continues to become a musician and teacher. To become a teacher is to allow, as Marc does, that one's values and practice have the capacity to change. And as David Hansen suggests, becoming a teacher "necessitates a *willingness* to change" (1995, p. 21). The stories in Marc's chapter detail some of the unique and specific circumstances that brought about some of these changes in his becoming.

Centrality of the Teacher in Teaching

Just as specific contexts and people shape the becoming of teachers and their practices, the identities of teachers are inextricably connected to and influential in shaping the contexts in which they teach. "The role or occupation [of teacher], itself, does not teach students. It is the person *within* the role who *shapes* it who teaches students, and who has an impact for better or for worse" (Hansen, 1995, p. 17). In other words, while teachers become in the contexts of their teaching, teaching contexts also change and grow around the teachers who reside in them. More directly, Parker Palmer suggests that teachers "teach who we are" (1997, p. 15). In the age of neoliberal education reform, however, a teacher's identity often exists in the service to predetermined outcomes like "standardization," "measurement," "rankings," and "generalizations;" the neoliberal outlook on teaching underscores fixed notions of curriculum and content, correct and incorrect ways of teaching accordingly. Neoliberal education works directly against the idea that "teaching as a vocation is to entertain the possibility that one has something to offer to it that nobody else can provide. It implies that one has a potentially unique and valuable contribution to make" (Hansen, 1995, p. 144). As I strove to understand the teaching identities of Greg, Charlie, Marc, and myself throughout this work, I wondered, *which aspects of these teachers' identities might bear the strongest influences on their practices?* I also wondered what kinds of unique contributions they each made within our specific teaching contexts. *Which aspects of their identities might characterize their unique embeddedness in their teaching worlds?*

In Charlie's chapter, for example, I narrate stories of a White man who is grappling with his privilege as he strives toward equitable, culturally-responsive practices in his classroom. And while "White," "man," and "Settler," are predetermined aspects of his identity over which he has

no control, the ways he interacts with his school community shows that he is striving toward allyship and deprivileging his own power; throughout my interactions with Charlie, I came to see this desire for decolonization as a central aspect of his becoming identity as a teacher. In talking with Charlie, I also came to understand the degree to which he views relationships as central to his work as a teacher—a value that prompted Charlie to seek out the professional company of a number of Native American culture bearers in his school community in order to help him see beyond his own view of the world. William Ayers similarly acknowledges that "the range of relationships and interactions that unfolds in the classroom is staggering, and staying wide awake to the swirling, tumultuous reality of classroom life as it's being lived is to be in a permanent posture of self-education" (2019, p. 16). The stories I will narrate in this chapter of Charlie's acute orientation toward what I perceive as deep and meaningful relationships with his school community stand in stark contrast to the depersonalization of a neoliberal education agenda. There is no standardized teaching script Charlie could have followed that would have led to what I witnessed in his classroom and in conversation. It is Charlie's consciousness that chooses to strive for equity and justice in his classroom, to work in community with others toward the resistance of oppressive power structures in his school.

The Complexities of Teaching

"There is no promised land in teaching, just that aching, persistent tension between reality and possibility" (Ayers, 2019, p. 84). Another sentiment neoliberal educationalists—those who believe they can control learning—can never accept. And yet, classrooms are made of complex individuals—students and teachers who come from diverse backgrounds and view reality from wildly divergent vantages. How could teaching be anything other than a highly

complicated affair? Hansen (1995) suggests that "teaching as a vocation goes hand in hand with questions, doubts, and uncertainties, some generated by the nature of the work, some by the sheer fact that the person treats the work as more than a routine task" (p. 15). From my initial conversations with Greg, Charlie, and Marc, it was overwhelmingly clear to me that each of these teachers devotes a great deal of energy toward negotiating (and re-negotiating) the modes of learning that take place in their classrooms. It was also evident to me that none of these teachers sees his work in the classroom as "complete," despite (for Marc and Greg) their many years of experience. In talking with each of these teachers about unique teaching contexts, I wanted to learn about the distinct challenges they and their students face on a daily basis. *How do Marc, Charlie, and Greg identify and think about a central and persistent problem, worry, or question in their particular teaching contexts?*

When I first met with Greg to discuss the possibility of working together in the research capacity that has been my dissertation work, he seemed to feel it was important for me to know that he had not discovered any "really successful models for teaching music"—if that's what I was looking for, his program had not achieved this standard. I remember the pain *I* felt in hearing Greg speak these words—the lament *I* felt in knowing that the neoliberal narratives of "models for success" had permeated the protective structure of care for his individual students and their music making that Greg had carefully constructed around in his classroom. "The fact of storytelling hints at a fundamental human unease, hints at human imperfection," Okri (2005) suggests, "Where there is perfection, there is no story to tell. (p. 91). Neoliberal models of education share a fundamental unease *toward* imperfection—an intolerance for the unmeasurable, the unpredictable, the uncontrollable, the subjective. As I narrate in Chapter VI, one of Greg's persistent questions centers around concepts of music learning and teaching that

foster both challenging and engaging experiences for his students. And yet, Berman (1998) suggests that "perhaps so many people resonate with Maxine as a person, an educator, a philosopher, a writer, and a speaker because she helps us to understand the joys and sorrows, the pain and ambiguities of being human" (p. 170). Greene's philosophical work acknowledges and *empathizes* with the complex and difficult work that teachers undergo in the process of teaching; Greene's work is more intimately connected with stories of real people and lived experience than with slogans—"Race to the top!"—acronyms—"UbD" and S.M.A.R.T. goals—and jargon—"brain-based, data-driven, differentiated paradigms!" Attending to the imperfectly complicated aspects of teaching serve not only as fostering a kind of real life empathy among humans, but it is also the only way of making progress in the first place: "If we want to be in a position to make progress, our first task is to explore the puzzles well" (Aristotle, 384-322 BCE/1995, pp. 995a24–32). In part, I wrote stories in chapters 4, 5, and 6, as a direct contradiction to the idea that teaching can be summed up into generalizable "models" of success by delving into the complex, "imperfect" aspects of teaching because they are real; and because this is a condition under which we can begin to re-imagine our teaching contexts.

Chapter IV

BECOMING MARC

The Tape Recorder

"It's that matter of learning how to listen to people"

In her essay entitled, "The Shapes of Childhood Recalled," Greene writes, "We are first cast into the world as embodied beings trying to understand … we reach out into the world—touching, listening, watching what presents itself to us … we bring patterns and structures into existence … [we] organize our lived experiences perceptually and imaginatively" (1995, p. 73). As a child, Marc captured the world around him with his tape recorder, listening to the sounds that presented themselves to him, grasping for meaning, striving to incorporate them into his own landscape; the tape recorder was the vehicle by which he journeyed through a world of sounds. "Some of [my brother's] friends were freaked out by me when I was little because I just got into a habit where I would sit right next to you," Marc reminisces, with the hit of a mischief in his smile. "You'd be playing something on the piano, and boy, when I've got a tape recorder, it was dangerous because I would record everybody, and go home, and play, and figure out what they were doing." Growing up in a family of church musicians—older siblings who sang and played a variety of instruments—Marc's childhood was bursting with opportunities for capturing sound on that recorder. In *Thinking in Jazz,* Paul Berliner weaves together stories of famous jazz musicians whose childhood home lives were filled with music in a variety of settings, some of which bear a striking resemblance to elements to Marc's childhood: "Kenny Barron used to anticipate eagerly the daily arrival of the neighborhood ice peddler, a blues player who routinely availed himself of the Barrons' piano after delivering the family's ice, fascinating the youngster

with his musical prowess;" after the man left, Barron, like Marc, would explore the piano, trying to mimic the sounds he had just heard (Berliner, 1994, p. 46).

Some of the earliest tracks imprinted on the memory of Marc's tape deck came into being on Sundays. When I asked Marc to describe the music present in his church community, he paused; he seemed to be replaying snippets of recorded material in his mind as he searched for an answer: "It definitely was gospel, but I guess the whole thing is there are so many different flavors of gospel," he explained. Marc contrasts Baptist gospel—"rural," "backwoods," "shuffley," with "that gritty, grindy feel that's perfect for blues"—with the Black gospel tradition of his own upbringing in the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). COGIC gospel traditions are more jazz-, pop-, and funk-influenced, Marc explained, pointing to groups like Earth, Wind, and Fire, the Funk Apostles, and Parliament-Funkadelic. "I could actually think about different churches in the area where the bass player sounded just like Bootsy Collins," Marc remembers, also connecting musicians Stevie Wonder and Cory Henry (former lead organist of Snarky Puppy) to the COGIC gospel tradition's roots. Similarly, Berliner (1994) points to the idea of becoming a musician in the richness of their church music traditions as being a commonality shared by many famous jazz musicians and eventually led to the emergence of a "gospel pop" genre (pp. 56-57). "The sanctified church had a deep significance for me, musically," recounts Dizzy Gillespie in Berliner, "I first learned the meaning of rhythm there and all about how music could transport people spiritually … The sanctified church's rhythm got to me as it did to anyone else who came near the place" (Berliner, 1994, pp. 218-219).

In spite of the many connections between COGIC gospel and mainstream artists that Marc highlights, however, he also remembers learning another lesson from members of the church: "I didn't realize this until much later—that you weren't supposed to play 'worldly

music.'" Marc's first exposure to this rule came when he and his brothers were playing background music at a church banquet. "I can remember being in high school and learning jazz stuff . . . so off a whim, I played 'Take the A Train.'" As the group locked into their Ellington-esque groove and started playing the familiar melody, Marc remembers his uncle rushing over to the group—"he reemed us out!" Several of the musical voices present in Berliner's text also comment on the experience of navigating secular and sacred music as Marc did in his childhood: "Mama and them were so religious that they wouldn't allow you to play boogie-woogie in the house," Nina Simone explains; "But [they] *would* allow you to use the boogie-woogie *beat* to play a gospel tune" (Nina Simone in Berliner, 1994, p. 988). Like Simone's, Marc's musical becoming included learning to navigate the complicated "ideological tensions between Black religious and secular music genres" and the sociocultural rules which structured the various settings in which Marc experienced sound as a child (Berliner, 1994, p. 988).

On another occasion, Marc and his brothers accompanied their father—a preacher at their church—during a week-long revival outreach in Georgia. "My oldest brother couldn't make it on the first few days, and so I was the piano player on hand." During a particular service, Marc remembers that he and his brothers found a groove they enjoyed: "We locked into this rhythm and kept adding songs to it." The revival's attendees, however, did not share their enthusiasm for the groove; instead, "They stopped cold and started rebuking devils!" I listened to Marc's story in amazement, imagining how confused he must have been in resonse to the crowd as a young teenager: "The rhythm we were playing that we thought was so cool—kind of the Bo Diddley rhythm (demonstrating)—I didn't know until that point, they kept saying, "That's the buck dance!"" Marc explains what he and his brothers learned that day: "The buck dance is a rhythm that they used—the slaves [*sic*], you see—even before slavery time, even before the slaves came

over, come to find out." For these young men, Marc explained, "That was the rhythm they used when they would do certain dances to …" he paused and carefully selected his words: " … show their physical prowess when they were eligible." Marc chuckled, finishing the story, reiterating that he "had no idea" at the time. "Just thought we were playing our really cool rhythm from somewhere," he remembers thinking, understanding later on that "far into the Deep South, those traditions are *fresh*." As hilarious as Marc's telling of the story was, it also makes sense that this would happen to the boy who carried a tape recorder around with him throughout childhood: Marc's early fascination with sound from so many different sources snowballed into an internalized repertoire of patterns and musical structure: "I was getting years of aural skills training" without realizing it.

Throughout his teenage years, Marc continued to play piano in the Church of God in Christ where his father preached. "Has anyone ever showed you what it means to follow a minister?" Marc asked me in conversation—I had not. Marc pulled up a Youtube video and narrated its events to me, pausing on occasion to emphasize certain points: "Right now, they're taking cues from the preacher's voice," Marc explained, as I listened to an energetic sermon delivered in almost a "sung style," punctuated by hits from the band every couple of seconds. "If you listen very closely to what he's doing, you're going to notice the way he breathes—it's a hidden rhythm . . . everything's in 4/4," even though "you don't feel [it]" We listened to the recording as the intensity of the sermon and the band's hits grew into a more obvious groove, and then a worship song. "These sermons happen in layers," Marc explained, "And if you think about a lot of speeches, they follow this same formula: First, you would walk and just speak pretty plainly;" Marc painted an aural landscape of this first stage, speaking softly and slowly in a subdued voice that almost required a strained ear to hear. "You read your script. You tell

everybody what everything's going to be about. And then—" Marc's speaking became more animated: "All of the sudden, you feel this elevation of energy" from the preacher, which the band has to listen for and match with dynamics and harmonic progression. "And I remember this so distinctly," Marc mused, "I never realized *people speak in key*." He played the video again and this time I heard the preacher return to a distinct "tonal center" throughout the various phrases, repetitions, and cadences. Of his own father's preaching, Marc remembers: "He would start to speak and then all of the sudden his voice would go to the same note … for some reason, his natural speaking key, when he got to a certain point, would be a D flat." Marc's acute sense of his father's vocalizations throughout the progression of the sermon also allowed him to react in musically supportive ways: "If he was in *B flat,* I knew that he was very tired. So we'd take it easy on him."

Like his son, Marc's father also carried a tape recorder with him to church services. Marc remembers a particular car ride during which his father replayed one of his recent sermons for analysis. "I remember him just beating himself up, 'Ugh, you hear that? I should have *shifted*.'" Marc wondered what his father had meant: "shifted?" After the conversation, however, young Marc began to notice structured patterns in the energy and repetition in his father's sermons: "His first shift was more—you just play a little fill, just sit back, very quiet." Gradually, his father would "up the energy:" "A lot of those phrases" consist of "a couple of very simple points that are repeated" and "built upon, which actually changed the way you played." As Marc's awareness of these patterns in his father's preaching expanded, he began to make changes in his own accompanying: "I could tell, after that conversation about shifting, where I [should] actually change the chord progression." Marc realized that he could match his father's energy shifts by modulating through the circle of fifths progression: each time his father's message coalesced on

a repeated phrase, Marc knew he was getting ready to shift, which he met with a modulation to the new key. “I didn’t know it was the [circle of fifths] until I got to college,” Marc explains, “I just knew they were a bunch of chords that work together.” As he continued to employ these modulations as accompaniment his father’s energy shifts, Marc also began to realize that the sermon would often reach its height around the tonal center of G:

> By the time we got there, I would be giving my sister these looks like, “Listen, be ready.” She was a great singer and I don’t know, it’s like this weird synergy that had to happen and I think because we’re all family, it worked well … What she’s listening for is whatever phrase that he’s repeating, if he says the same phrase three times or more, *he’s telling you what song to sing*…

A smooth transition from his father’s sermon to the band’s worship-leading rested on Marc’s ability to listen for his father’s final shift and cue the other band members: “There’d be a certain high note that I would throw on and she’d better be at the first note of that song in order for it to work,” Marc explains. “Because by the time [my father] turned around to go to his seat, we’d better be in gear 10.”

Berliner (1994) comments on the extent to which musicians and ministers in traditional Black churches often work in tandem (similar to Marc’s recountings) to build the congregation’s emotional experience to a height of intensity that was conducive to emotional expression. In these settings, the musicians’ primary focus revolves around the emotional experience of the congregation: “Churches that encourage ecstatic singing, handclapping, and animated physical movement in the service of religious devotion hold inestimable value for young musicians in the congregation,” Berliner writes, in that they “cultivate an expressive freedom in performance” and that “musicians whose religious backgrounds are more moderate [often] find the music of fundamentalist churches compelling” (p. 56). As I listened to and thought about the stories Marc recounted of his musical becoming in this setting, I find myself similarly captivated by the

connection between sacred music and emotion as Berliner describes in this passage. I am also particularly intrigued by the acute sensitivity to sound that Marc developed throughout his years in the COGIC church—the process of knowing and reading the various church situations and contexts, then making real-time decisions which revolve around the needs of the people involved. The kind of person- and context-focused music making Marc describes in these stories differs so starkly to my own notation-based and tradition-focused childhood music experiences in a way that feels compelling as I learn more about Marc's musical becoming.

Becoming a Musician: Learning in Communion

"Hey—come over here. Let's play this together."

Marc's earliest musical memories originate from his time at home with siblings. With three older brothers and an older sister, Marc explains, "By the time I came along, everybody else was already playing something." The piano Marc's parents purchased was originally intended for his sister, and although she demonstrated a general lack of interest in the instrument, Marc's oldest brother paid attention to the lessons from afar: "When the teacher left, he went and played the lesson," then taught it to each of his younger brothers. Although neither Marc nor his brothers ever ended up taking "formal" piano lessons, their education at the instrument didn't stop after the eldest brother's preliminary teaching: "We all have this in common where we'd learn a lot just by going around and watching other people." Looking back on these early family stories and the surprise his parents expressed toward the spontaneous musicianship exhibited by this brother, Marc reflects "He wasn't old enough to read yet, but *he was old enough to hear*." Berliner describes a sense of internalized of musicianship and sensibility that resonates with the story of Marc's brother and his ability "to hear:"

> Sailors cannot see the wind, but they feel its pressure and observe whether a ship's sails are taut or luffing. Swimmers cannot see the ocean's current, but they feel its pull upon them and gauge its character from patterns of undulating waves. Similarly, musicians cannot see a beat, but they learn to discern it . . . to infer it as the common underlying pulse (Berliner, 1994, p. 220).

Marc's and Berliner's words remind me that music is, first and foremost, an aural experience—sounds that are first and foremost "heard" and "felt" before they are ever "read."

Marc described to the COGIC church community he grew up in as having embodied an inviting atmosphere in which he was able to learn from quite a few different musicians: "I can remember being very small; the first thing was 'just sit there and watch the keyboard' … [you're] too little to be there, so you just sit in the front row, trying to creep as close to it as possible." A few years later, "It was like 'you can *sit* with the musician but you can't *touch* anything.'" Eventually, Marc explained, "I can remember being eight or nine years old and finally there's a friend of my oldest brother's who was on piano and who'd say, 'Hey, come here and sit next to me. Okay, play this chord.'" Marc and his siblings learned music this way throughout their childhood years in the COGIC church, and although Marc often found himself playing the keyboard he also had the opportunity to learn to play a bit of guitar, bass, and drumset.

Gradually, Marc and his siblings gained more responsibility as musicians in the church until they were the ones leading them: "It was like a sign of respect growing up—certain people walk into a room and you would just know (Marc puts on a grandiose voice as he speaks), 'Oh, the elder statesman is here!' and then move out of the way" so they could play a particular instrument. Marc remembers a time when he returned home during his undergraduate years and attended church with his family: "I was 20 years old, but one of the younger players got up and was like, "Oh, I'm just keeping [the bench] warm for you." Marc recalls, "It was this amazing

feeling," and then pauses: "But it's funny because it's not this 'ego thing,' because you start to realize that you're sitting here because all of the people that you [learned] from are now sitting on the diocese as clergyman." Marc seems to recognize his newly elevated rank as lead keyboardist in this moment as part of the natural order of music making in his community—that perhaps the "amazing feeling" for Marc flows more from recognizing he has reached a new stages of his musical becoming over the years than from a sense of entitlement or ego. I think 20-year-old Marc would likely have been ready to give his keyboard up to any of the musicians-turned-clergyman at the drop of a hat.

From our first meeting, Marc's stories have continually reminded me of musician and sociologist, Thomas Turino (2008), who frames musical experiences on a continuum bookended by what he calls "participatory" and "performative" contexts—a conceptual structure I will continue to develop alongside Marc's stories throughout this chapter. Marc's commentary on the lack of ego or competition associated with the musical roles present in his church music tradition illustrates one of the primary qualities of participatory music experiences for Turino: "As compared with the other musical fields, participatory music making/dancing is the most democratic, the least formally competitive, and the least hierarchical" (Turino, 2008, p. 37). Fostering a communal experience of spiritual and emotional expression was at the heart of music making in the stories Marc told me about the musical contexts of his childhood in church; while skills such as technical proficiency would obviously have been important for church musicians like Marc in working toward this goal, the *display* of such (i.e., "performance") was not the focus of these musical situations. Thus, the emphasis on the emotional experience and expression of people involved seems to have worked toward the less ego-driven musical ends of which Marc speaks.

In addition to those Marc alluded to in his stories of church music, Turino names several other integral qualities of participatory music experiences, which I list here and will develop further through stories of Marc's own music teaching later in this chapter. Music experiences with a stronger participatory orientation typically entail: (a) an emphasis on the present: the musical "doing" rather than the (future) musical "product;"(b) a lack of artist-audience distinction such that all people are involved in the musical expression (rather than separations of stage and seating); (c) a wide range of participatory roles with varying degrees of specialization; 4.) a focus on the conductivity of the music to expression and emotion (as Marc and Berliner note); and 5.) experiences of sound that are chosen and acted upon in the moment according to the interactions between participants such that "many of the sonic details of a performance are not, and cannot be, preplanned" (Turino, 2008, p. 37). Participatory musical settings are primarily judged on the quality of the experience—"how participants feel during the activity, with little thought to how the music and dance might sound or look apart from the act of doing and those involved" (Turino, 2008, p. 29).

The performance/participation framework is not intended to serve as an either/or binary in categorizing musical contexts as one or the other. Instead, Turino theorizes the two concepts as being connected by a continuum of qualities that might be used to fit a variety of musical scenarios: a musical context might embody certain qualities such that it leans closer toward the participatory end of the spectrum, for example, while also maintaining aspects associated with performance. In the following vignettes, I interpret Marc's pedagogy and rehearsal style as leaning more heavily toward the participatory end of the spectrum, and yet at the same time, he and his students are also in the process of preparing for the performative end of a concert for their parents and school community. I suggest that the classification of musical settings as either

participatory or performative is less important than a consideration of how the qualities embodied by a particular musical setting impact the students who inhabit it.

* * *

When I visited his classroom for the first time, I saw Marc sing and play a variety of instruments *well*—a drumset here, a bass guitar there, and a finger-picked acoustic guitar accompaniment in another class. In my notes that day, I wrote: "It feels like the students are here to make music *with* Marc just as much as they're here to learn from him." In reflecting on my conversations with Marc—his musical becoming in the COGIC church, the atypical structuring of his classes into "emerging ensembles"—I have come to see the idea of participating in or "making music together" as a central value of Marc's identity. "Instead of saying [to the students], 'Hey, go over there, try that,'" Marc explains, "I like the idea of [saying], 'Hey, sit next to me—let's play together.'" In the following vignettes, I recount two episodes of Marc's teaching that, from my perspective, embody a participatory orientation toward music education—or in Marc's words, the act of "playing together." In both episodes, Marc is both a leader and an active participant in the music making with his students.

The Double-Booked Lesson

At the start of the period, a group of students who looked like high schoolers sauntered into the classroom: a boy and a girl each picked up electric guitars, two boys sat down at drumsets, and another student found their way to a bass guitar. A group of younger-looking students also wandered into the classroom with acoustic guitars, and clustered together near the blackboard. Marc wrote out a chord progression in chalk: A, E, F#m, D. Addressing the acoustic guitar players, he asked, "Do you remember F# minor?" A student played an F major chord: "Is

that it?" Marc smiled: "Nope. We'll work on that." One of the older students queued up a recording on Youtube of John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads," which blasted through the speakers long enough for me to hear the chords Marc wrote on the board before the student turned it down. "Now I want a banjo," Marc said, to no one in particular. "Can you play it?" one of the electric guitarists asked. "I think I could figure something out." "Wow, that would be awesome." After helping the guitarists tune (and letting one student use his personal guitar), Marc joined the rhythm section who had begun working out a basic groove for the song. He motioned to a student to sit down at the classroom's second drumset, to which the student responded that he preferred to play the congas. Marc made a joke about the student being a "drum snob" and then walked over to help him figure out a conga part.

The class period felt like a workshop for the first half: everyone focused on their own projects—some in smaller groups like the acoustic guitars or the drummers, some individually, before coming together throughout the latter half of the class period to test out how their parts fit together. Marc meandered around to the various sections as they worked and helped troubleshoot. The drummers grooved continuously throughout the period and the other rhythm section members joined them here and there to practice their parts in time. Marc's interactions with students seemed to be a consistent mix of musical advice, modeling demonstrations, conversations about the musical context, and humorous interjections interspersed throughout. "This class has a chill vibe," I wrote in my notes, and I couldn't help bobbing along throughout most of the lesson.

Marc called the class together to rehearse: "Kyle, what's the bass rhythm?" Kyle seemed to be spacing out: "What?" Marc rolled his eyes, walked over to the board to write, "Kyle: What's the bass rhythm?" and directed younger guitar players' attention to his words. "With me

now: ‘Kyle, what’s the bass rhythm?’” The guitarists timidly echoed Marc and then Kyle laughed as he launched into the opening riff. The drumset player joined Kyle, a bit shaky at first, but more confident as they continued repeating the groove. Then the drummer stopped to lament the challenge. Marc: “You’re getting it (he was). You’re playing this ten times better than you did yesterday.” Marc pointed at the guitarists and then at the board: “What’s the bass rhythm, Kyle?” they said in unison, with a little more confidence. Kyle laughed again and restarted the groove. The rhythm section seemed to be locking into place now; I couldn’t hear what the acoustic guitarists were playing but they seemed to be struggling with some of the chords. Marc stopped the group and the conga player spoke: “Why are you looking at me? Was it right?” Marc smiled: “I wasn’t looking at you because it was ‘right.’ I was looking at you because it was *good*.” Marc walked over to the drummer again: “You’re doing this part beautifully; now listen to this other part (speaking the rhythm): ‘Dat __ __ , bom bom bom.’” The student: “*Oh*, it’s a ‘bom bom bom?’” The class laughed and Marc told a brief story about a time he played in a group led by a conductor who didn’t speak English but instead led the entire rehearsal with rhythmic syllables. Marc checked on the guitar players and troubleshooted fingerboard patterns for the F# minor chord. Then he pointed at the blackboard: “Kyle…!” And they were off.

While chatting with Marc between class periods, I learned that this ensemble had actually been a “double-booked lesson” made up of a rhythm section of seniors (drummers, guitarists, bass), and a seventh grade guitar class (the acoustic guitars sitting near the blackboard) whose lesson had been canceled due to a holiday. Marc said, “I wasn’t sure how much we were going to get done but I figured it would be better than not seeing the seventh graders at all” (I am paraphrasing from my notes). His facilitation of the lesson was masterful: one moment Marc was troubleshooting a drumset pattern with a student, the next, he was helping the guitarists learn

their F# minor chord. At one point, Marc hopped on a bass guitar to help steady the groove; at another, he worked to foster camaraderie between the more timid seventh grade guitarists ("Kyle!") and the senior rhythm section. Part of what made Marc's leadership so impressive was how he engaged such a wide cross-section of students who, in Turino's characterization of participatory experiences, played "a variety of roles that differ[ed] in difficulty and degrees of specialization" (Turino, 2008, p. 30). Marc's own role as music teacher is, of course, the most specialized, while the beginning guitarists are the least, with the senior percussionists are each somewhere between. And yet, Marc found ways to include each member of the class through differentiating a variety of musical roles. Consider the brief dialogue between Marc and the drummer who wanted to play the congas: Marc could have said, "Sorry, there's no conga part in this song," or "Congas don't fit with this musical style," but instead, he respected the student's participatory preference and helped him figure out how to navigate a role for himself on the instrument.

Turino distinguishes participatory musical spaces from performative ones as being primarily concerned with the music-making—"the doing"—as it exists in the present rather than focusing on end products (2008, p. 28). On the continuum between these two musical ends, the rehearsal I observed seems to fall somewhere in the middle, but closer in my opinion to the participatory mode than the performative; while the students I observed were preparing to perform a concert in less than a month, I was only made aware of this in conversation with Marc afterward. At no point in this rehearsal (or in the other four rehearsals of Marc's that I observed that day) did I hear Marc speak of concert preparation, even by way of a passing comment. So while Marc's students likely understood that they would one day perform the pieces they rehearsed from this lesson on a stage, performance as a goal seemed largely absent from any of

the communication I observed between Marc and the students. I think that "chill vibe" I felt in the lesson is also related to this present-focused attitude: instead of a rehearsal propelled by the stress and seriousness of an impending concert, the space felt more like a musical get-together, enjoyable in its own right apart from future considerations.

Another quality of the lesson that leaned toward the participatory end of the spectrum was the openness and repetition of the musical form that guided their playing: a chord progression for the guitarists, a groove for the drummers, a bassline for Kyle, and a set of lyrics to guide the song's progression. Marc didn't call out specific measure numbers, only "beginnings," "middles," and "endings," or "the drum groove" and "the bass rhythm." When Turino writes that "sounds are chosen and acted upon in the moment" participatory music, he is not saying that the result is wholly unplanned, but that it is less about specific prescriptions of individual sounds; instead, sounds are chosen in the moment by participants in accordance with the overarching structure of the song: in this case, "Take Me Home, Country Roads." When the drumset player asked Marc if what he played was "right," Marc responded, "I wasn't looking at you because it was 'right.' I was looking at you because it was *good*." Here, Marc gives pointed praise to the drummer on account of the *appropriateness* of his playing rather than its accuracy: in other words, I think Marc is saying, "Your musical contribution meshes well with ours," rather than saying, "You are accurately playing what John Denver's drummer plays."

Throughout the various rehearsals I observed (including the double-booked lesson), I noticed that Marc rarely stood in front of his students; instead, he often led from within and alongside the group. I didn't even realize until the end of a full day observing Marc that his music classroom wasn't set up for a large ensemble: there was a cluster of stands in one corner, a drumset in another, a chalkboard at the "front" of the room (although I only call it such because

chalkboards are typically associated with "fronts" of classrooms); Marc and his students used the space in different ways throughout the day depending on the needs of each group. In typical secondary rehearsal rooms in the U.S., there is a clear distinction between the physical space inhabited by the conductor—usually a large podium and/or piano near the front of the room—and that of the ensemble musicians—chairs, stands, and risers. Yet in Marc's classroom, the distinction in space occupied by teacher and students was blurred in a similar manner to the way Turino describes the lack of artist-audience distinctions in participatory music settings.

Emerging Ensemble 4

During one of Marc's classes—listed as "Emerging Ensemble 4" on his schedule—I witnessed a together-ing of students and teacher in song that I have continually returned to in thinking about who Marc is as a teacher—a compilation of musical moments so expressive and rich and yet so intimate, I remember feeling at the time that I shouldn't have been there. I sat at my computer in a far corner of the room as Marc and two students assembled themselves near the chalkboard: Marc sat tuning his acoustic guitar and two seventh grade girls pulled chairs over to him, making a triangular-looking chamber ensemble—a tiny "team huddle" before a big game—while they waited for Marc to finish tuning. "I wrote a song this weekend," one of the girls announced. "You did?" Marc asked, looking up while he continued to pluck at the guitar strings. "What's it about?" They chatted quietly for a bit and the girl explained that she had only written a few sentences. "I can't wait to hear it when it's half done," Marc responded. I thought about my own declarations of composed songs to my piano teacher as an elementary student and the way she often brushed aside these comments with an unenthusiastic, "great," before flipping to the next song in my lesson book. I appreciated Marc's attention to this young student's musical efforts outside of class in this moment.

Marc's tuning morphed into a chord progression peppered with a few arpeggiated patterns, and the two girls joined in. He paused for a moment to give the girls their starting pitches in his crisply clear yet warm and gentle falsetto voice before restarting. Three voices and one guitar melded in harmony: "Ain't no mountain high, ain't no valley low, ain't no river wide enough, baby." Marc paused the group for a mini lesson. The version of the song they all knew, he explained was made famous by Marvin Gaye. "It's always Marvin Gaye who takes the songs!" one of the girls said. "Well, he knew how to make the money," Marc responded with a smile, continuing to explain that although it is less well known now, the version sung by Diana Ross and the Supremes has some harmony parts in the chorus that he thought would work well for their voices. Marc demonstrated the rhythmically even chorus that the girls were accustomed to singing from Marvin Gaye's version; then he showed them how the Supremes did it: combining a double-time rhythmic feel to each of the vocal lines in the chorus, the space between each of which was punctuated by a brief, yet dramatic pause. "Try it with me," Marc invited, and the girls sang Diana Ross's chorus along with him. Then Marc demonstrated each of the three harmonic parts and took out his tape recorder: "February 25th, 2020, Jenny, Alison, and Mr. H.: Part 1." Marc and the girls sang through the melody line of the chorus with the new rhythm. Then Marc sang the second homophonic line into the recorder, and then the third, letting the students know he would send the recording to them (and the student who was absent) after class so that they could practice at home. I noticed that only Marc had a music stand in front of him; the girls were singing from memory.

The trio continued their rehearsal of songs for a Motown-themed concert: Jackson 5's "I want you back" and Marvin Gaye's "Heard it through the grapevine;" Marc told me in a later conversation that he had selected the concert theme and that the students in each of his classes

had selected the repertoire. The rehearsal continued in a similar fashion: Marc gave little tidbits of history on the musicians who made the songs famous while asking the girls to explain the meaning of the lyrics to him, the girls sang together with Marc's acoustic accompaniment, and Marc continued recording various vocal lines for the students to practice at home. I watched the seventh grade girls from afar throughout the lesson: their singing was quiet and somewhat timid, but impressively tuneful, especially given the exposed nature of this chamber ensemble setting. I smiled as they incorporated tasteful scoops and rhythmic anticipations here and there as they sang in a moderately pop-like style—the kind I imagine many choir directors would attempt to purge from a performance.

The rehearsal ended with Jackson 5's "I'll be there;" one of the girls sang the solo while the other girl sang backup harmonies with Marc. "So what's this song about?" Marc asked. The soloist explained that it was a love song, narrating the story with a half-spoken, half-sung response. "So it's got kind of a rainy feel, right?" Marc asked, and the girl nodded. "That rainy feel isn't coming out. I can tell you're thinking about 'note, note, note' … I *know* you know the notes!" Marc added, "Have you ever heard people who sing badly but perform well? Willie Nelson made a whole career out of singing songs badly." The girls giggled and Marc assured the student that she was already singing well—that she could start thinking more about performing.

The trio sang again—"You and I must make a pact, we must bring salvation back"—and for a few moments, I felt like time had stopped: the soft, sweet tones of the students' exposed harmonies as they locked in with Marc's, the trust placed in his musical guidance throughout the song, and the image of two White middle school girls learning a Motown song with their music teacher—a Black man—in rural, upstate New York. The skin on my arms furled up into

goosebumps and I could feel the tides rising behind my eyes—it was a powerful image of what "making music together" in a school could look and sound like.

Like the double-booked lesson, the Emerging Ensemble 4 rehearsal embodied a variety of participatory qualities: open musical forms and a lack of prescriptive/notate structure, musical participation that was tailored specifically to the individuals, diverse participatory roles (Marc on guitar and voice, a soloist, a student singing back-up harmonies), and a general focus on the present music making (rather than concert preparation) throughout the rehearsal. Yet the aspect of participatory music making that I found most compelling in this lesson was its focus on musical expression as it connects to "how participants *feel* during the activity" (Turino 2008, p. 29). "It's got kind of a rainy feel, right?" Marc had asked the girls in an effort to steer their focus from technique to expression.

Helping students think expressively instead of technically is a common practice for music teachers, in my experience: I remember my childhood piano teacher's "Ladder of Musicianship"—a posterboard she often pulled out to help me gauge my progress toward performing a musical work: the bottom rung read "pitch," the next rung up was "rhythm," the next "tempo," then "dynamics," "articulation,' "style," and perhaps the addition of "pedal." The term that rested on the top rung was "expression," a word that always felt a bit nebulous to me after weeks of painstaking attention to the previous sequence. Was "expression" its own "element" apart from the ones I had already incorporated? I wondered. Was it an inner emotional state I should maintain while playing? Did it require attaching an image or story to the sounds? And why did expression always come last in the progression? I recall many of my former band directors similarly encouraging us to "play more expressively" in weeks leading up to the concert, often emphasizing the dynamic markings in scores that we had previously ignored. And

yet, these discussions of expression always came after we had demonstrated basic technical proficiency of the song, namely correct notes and rhythms, and the ability to maintain a steady tempo across the band. Marc's story about Willie Nelson calls the idea of expression as "icing on the cake" of a technical performance into question for me as I have continued to reflect on this lesson.

Christopher Emdin's concept of "Pentecostal Pedagogy" is another framing that I think meshes particularly well with Marc's church music background and his value for "making music together." Emdin (2016) suggests that one of the main strengths of pentecostal church services is that they provide safe spaces for the congregations "to identify, discuss, and express emotion" (p. 54). Similarly, Berliner (1994) suggests that these church services espouse the idea that "to feel" is therefore "to be," such that expressivity held as central to all musical and spiritual engagements in the church (p. 374). Turino also highlights the participatory nature of music and dance in church traditions like Marc's, suggesting that people who grow up in these traditions typically feel less inhibited in expressing themselves musically because it has always been "a normal part of family and social life." Emdin, Berliner, and Turino describe a bit of what I think Marc is trying to bring about with the Emerging Ensemble 4 girls; I think he is trying to create a space in this rehearsal for the students to express themselves more freely without continually being inhibited by the idea that technical proficiency—that expression doesn't have to be at the top of the ladder of musical processes, but rather woven throughout.

As I continued to reflect on the lesson and the impact the trio's musical expression had on *my* own emotional being at the time, I was also reminded of another impactful performance of Jackson 5's "I'll be there;" although I didn't recall the performance the time of the observation, I remembered afterward that my 5th grade choir sang this song for their spring concert in 2017,

which also happened to be my final concert as a music teacher at the school before I left Korea to begin doctoral studies in New York City. In addition to "I'll Be There," the concert program included a gospel tune, "Let There Be Peace," "Now I See the Light" from Disney's *Tangled*, and a few others whose titles I can't recall. After the concert, my co-teacher and I were taken aback by our colleagues' overflowing praise. At first, we were confused—in selecting the concert repertoire, we had primarily chosen songs we thought were pedagogically appropriate for our students' vocal development and had lyrics that would afford some context-based discussions. And yet our colleagues' markedly different reception to this concert suggested that the ways they experienced the music went deeper than "pedagogical appropriateness." What we came to understand in conversation with our mostly-American colleagues afterward was that the songs resonated more strongly in light of the political climate in the United States. The concert took place a few months into Donald Trump's presidency; Americans had already witnessed the enactment a travel ban aimed at citizens from Muslim countries, the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, and our withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal. Amid what had already become a tumultuous few months, my American colleagues were in need of the peace, love, light, and fellowship our students sang about in this concert. In spite of our lack of attention to the emotional expressivity in the repertoire we had programmed, our colleagues connected with this performance in ways that brought context, sound, and expression together in a way I imagine might be similar to the musically expressive experiences Marc describes of his childhood. I think he is intentionally trying to bring about a bit of this expression through a sense of musical togetherness with his classes too.

Choosing "Teacher"

"This is where I think I want to be."

Marc considers himself an anomaly among family members on account of his career choice: "My oldest brother, the one who taught us how to play [piano], is now the pastor of the church that my *father* was the pastor of … my second brother is a minister, the third [brother is a minister], my sister *married* a minister … and I'm a public school teacher." Marc laughs about the strangeness of "becoming a minister" as being such a common family trade: "Truth be told," he reflects, "I'm the most 'secular' [member] of the family." I wonder if Marc's accidental escapades in playing "worldly music" such as "Take the A Train" and Bo Diddley rhythms as a child were part of what laid ground for this "secular" career path.

Although he remembers "knowing" he wanted to go to school for music, Marc entered teaching with a question mark. Marc remembers his parents urging him to "do something practical," and in addition to "getting along with my music teachers quite well," Marc thought teaching might be something he would enjoy. After two years of his undergraduate degree in music education, however, Marc took a break from school. I asked Marc what some of his doubts about music teaching might have been at this point in his preservice education: "I think a large part of it was what was available. As a music major at a conservatory," he explains, "especially as a voice major . . . 'what you can play' and 'what you can sing' is very small … and to tell you the truth, I wasn't in love with that." Marc remembers feeling the lack of choice he had in vocal repertoire selection as an undergraduate—"you're handed the standard repertoire"—and tried to envision himself as a choral director as he wondered, "Am I going to have to do this music for the next 25 or 30 years?" The prospect of teaching Western Classical

vocal music for a career was enough to dissuade Marc from continuing the degree. During his year away from college, Marc was able to piece together full-time work as a performer in several bands/combos and as a director of several community choirs. It was Marc's girlfriend at the time (who later became his wife) who coaxed him back into school: "It's a shame you are so close to finishing your degree and aren't doing it," he remembers his girlfriend saying. With her help, Marc re-enrolled in the college and finished his music education degree.

After graduating, Marc taught in various capacities as a substitute teacher in a few districts upstate. Being a substitute teacher, particularly in long-term music substitute positions, helped to solidify Marc's interest in teaching; he enjoyed the daily interactions with students and discovered a preference for teaching middle school. "There's just a different energy with seventh and eighth graders—there's still a youthful innocence, but there's that higher order thinking that's just starting [to develop] that makes it a fun challenge." After hearing him say this, I recalled a moment between Marc and the two "Emerging Ensemble 4" girls before class had started that had made me smile: the two girls had entered class together, chatting, seemingly oblivious of anyone and everyone around them. One of the girls was spouting a constant stream of supposed coronavirus statistics while the other girl waved her hands in the air, dramatically, riffing on variations of, "Everyone has it at our school!" and "We're all going to die!" Marc entered the conversation, nonchalantly, as he continued to set up for the trio's rehearsal: "The problem with statistics is that people often don't take the qualifiers into consideration." The girl who was reciting statistics paused and Marc explained what a "qualifier" was—the specific conditions under which a statistical assertion might be accurate. I couldn't hear the rest of the conversation but smiled as I wrote in my notes, "This is *such* a middle school conversation!" I

appreciated the way Marc treated the girls (and their dramatizations) like adults while trying to help them think about the situation more critically.

Marc continued to teach as a substitute in several districts upstate for around six years after graduating and had resolved, "I was not going to be a 30-year-old substitute teacher." He had been searching for full time positions, all the while, but then Marc said something that made me pause: "I was out for interviews and all that," he explained, "and let's just say 'the time wasn't right for me to have a position in this area.' We'll just leave it at that." I wondered if Marc was talking about racism here without naming it directly; I can only imagine that the job prospects in education for a Black man in the early 90's in rural New York would have been limited. Later in this conversation, I invited Marc to reflect on the time he spent as a substitute teacher before landing his first music teaching position and some of the challenges through which he persevered as a substitute teacher looking for full time work. He points to a few general layers of bureaucracy in job interviews, such as schools having interview quotas even when they already have a candidate in mind. "And all those things are fine because, to tell you the truth, I ended up landing where I needed to be. So it all worked out. I don't even look back and think about those things too much."

After six years of subbing, Marc started his first, full-time music teaching job on his 30th birthday. He taught music at three different schools over the course of nine years before settling into the position at his current school. Marc describes his relationship with the current school community where he teaches similarly to how some couples recount meeting each other: "It was just 'one of those things,'" he reflects, "I just knew it was the right fit . . . the way interviews were carried on, the atmosphere of the school, the entire process just let me know that, 'This is where I think I want to be.'" While he faced several challenges at previous schools—one school

where budget cuts threatened to eliminate his position, another school which he describes as a "mismatched culture and climate," and a few places where he couldn't see himself staying long-term—Marc looks back on the fifteen years he has spent in his current position as "definitely the right fit."

Although Marc did not elaborate much on why these other schools felt mismatched, he had much to say about why his current school *was* a good fit. Perhaps the most enticing aspect initially was his superintendent's wish to find someone who would work to "modernize the music department." "That was the charge," Marc remembered with a hint of amazement still lingering in his voice as he recounted the memory to me; he remembered thinking at the time, "You're *never* going to be offered that kind of mission as a teacher." It is also around this time in Marc's becoming-teacher that he began to think about curriculum more flexibly:

> I was starting to get a feel for some changes in curriculum. Because you know, when you come first into a job, you think you have to do exactly what was done before how it was done before. And having been to that district, I started realizing, 'Oh, we get to have a say in what the curriculum could be and should be.' So that really was a nice change.

I thought back to Marc's reckoning with Western classical vocal repertoire during his undergraduate years and the question about repertoire—"Do I really have to do *this* for the next 25 to 30 years?— that had prompted him to step back for a year and re-evaluate music education as a profession. Fifteen years later, Marc found himself in a position of more curricular freedom and flexibility than he had originally thought was possible. It seemed to me like an important barrier had been lifted from Marc's becoming as a music teacher with this realization—perhaps the job might more closely resemble some of the musical experiences of his childhood that drew Marc to teaching in the first place.

I asked Marc about how his relationship with his school has continued to sustain him over the past 15 years—in what ways have he and the school continued to be a good fit for each

other? Most generally, Marc points to the school's culture, which he describes as "relaxed and respectful and "structured without being overbearing," as meshing well with his own personality and values: "When you can walk down the halls, [you will] see any number of people just relaxed, sharing a laugh, getting along quite well," Marc explains. "But when it's time to get the work done, everyone can buckle down and be serious for as long as it takes to get the job done … It makes it nice to look forward to getting to work because of that." Marc also points to some of the administrative changes within the school throughout his time there: "We've had quite a bit of turnover, but it's all been pretty smooth … I think it's because that entire culture of the school was maintained throughout."

Marc's description of a learning environment that is both relaxed and structured fits well with the percussion/guitar "double-booked" lesson that I observed when I visited Marc's classroom. I wrote in my notes that day:

> Lots of laughter here and there … Marc is good about redirecting too—"ok everybody, back to the beginning"— and bringing them back to the music making. Marc is standing on the sideline as the rehearsal dips in and out of individual practice/coaching, then back to the full group.

Here, again, Emdin's concept pedagogical pedagogy emphasizes an experiential flow similar to what I observed of Marc's classes: what he describes as a "delicate balance between structure and improvisation" (2016, p. 49) and preacher's (in this case, teacher's) ability to "guide without controlling, to create the best context, to be flexible, and to make the crowd move" (Emdin, 2016, p. 52). As an observer of the double-booked lesson, there was no question in my mind that Marc was leading the students through a series of structured activities he had prepared for them: he directed the students throughout the lesson and often joined them on an instrument that seemed to hold the group together. And while his presence as the teacher clearly offered the students the structure they needed to be productive during class—troubleshooting patterns with

the drummers, working on chord fingerings with the guitarists, helping the rhythm section find their groove together—Marc also facilitated an environment of humor, camaraderie—"Kyle?!"—and individual work time that added to the "chill vibe" of the tunes they rehearsed. Emdin points specifically to the call-and-response aspect of pentatcostal church services as fostering focus and engagement in the congregation, a pedagogical tool Marc also employed in encouraging the humorous interplay between Kyle and the rest of the class.

The Ivory Tower

You know what—why not? What's wrong with strumming chords?

Marc is an optimist. He persevered through an undergraduate degree that didn't align with his own musical preferences, he substitute-taught for six years before finding his first music teaching job, and he taught for nine years in schools that didn't feel like quite the right fit (although he is also quick to acknowledge that he wasn't unhappy in these schools and places). Marc doesn't spend much time dwelling on the past in our conversations—"It all worked out… I don't spend time thinking about those things much any more." I remember talking with Marc over Zoom shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic hit: "How are you *doing*?" I asked, still partly in shock, myself, over the worldwide shift to online learning. "Oh, it's an adjustment period, but things are going well," Marc responded. "[Actually], I think we're lucky to be music teachers," he continued, "I think we have a lot of freedom to kind of 'putz along,' to make mistakes, and figure it out" afterward. Marc explained that some of his other colleagues were stressed about having to figure out how to cover the exact same curriculum with the challenge of an online setting and limited resources. Even in the midst of a complete upheaval of normalcy and

regularity in Marc's teaching life, he continued to take solace in the idea of curriculum as a malleable aspect of learning.

Marc speaks his mind about what he sees some of the bigger, systemic issues in the field of music education; but he is also humble and frequently points to aspects of his own teaching that he has striven to change in light of these critiques. In conversation, I asked Marc how his teaching had changed over the course of his nearly 30-year career (including his beginning years as a substitute teacher): "I think I'm a lot less strict than I when I started … it's that matter of always trying to live up to an expectation that probably wasn't even there from other people, then realizing, 'You know what? Relax.'" When he talks about "becoming less strict" and learning to "relax," (a word he also used to describe his school's culture), Marc isn't talking about "discipline" or "classroom management;" I think what he is describing has more to do with developing a critical outlook on the supposed expectations placed on music teachers by tradition—"teaching how we were told we should teach."

The value Marc places on a relaxed teaching atmosphere seems to flow, at least in part, from his calm demeanor and low-key sense of humor. He is also an expressive speaker whose vocal inflections as a narrator often paint a tonal picture of the concepts he describes with words (as he did in describing the flow of his father's sermons). In our discussion around Marc's concept of "strictness" to tradition, I noticed that on several occasions, Marc popped into a distinct vocal tonality which I have affectionately come to think of as his "Ivory Tower Voice." The voice is subtle but distinct—I can hear its beginning and end clearly when I re-listen to our conversations in passages related to "ego" and adherence to tradition: the Ivory Tower Voice, as I hear it, is the voice of a White man in the 1950's—perhaps a news reporter, a politician, or a talk show host—it's a canned voice "clothed in condescension" (in the words of John Steinbeck);

it is the voice of someone who asserts authority simply through his position of privilege and power in society—someone who, in Marc's words, preaches the merits of engaging in "high music." I think this voice is Marc's way—perhaps even subconsciously—of gently mocking the condescending authority of textbooks, college professors, conservatory musicians, and zealots of the Western classical music tradition. As an example of the "strictness" Marc has worked to distance himself from as an educator, Marc says, "There's this thing where (here comes the voice) '*You have to have 30 clarinets in your band as opposed to 20*'" . . . what he describes as "trying to live up to what the textbook or instrumental/choral practices teacher said." Marc acknowledges that in some contexts—especially historical ones—this is good advice. Yet in situations where playing in a 45-person concert band or choir is not appealing to students in the first place, the advice is meaningless.

Marc speaks about "ego," more broadly as being at the root of much of what he sees as problematic in music education: "I really think we have missed the boat [in music education] … we want to go to (enter: The Voice) *the* '*high' end of things, where we have people play these 'great pieces of music' and they sound 'fantastic;'"* lamenting that there's often "nothing beyond the performance that gets carried on into anything else." Marc clarifies that he thinks "there's nothing wrong with doing things at that 'high level' if that's where the kids are at … if you think about any number of band or orchestral pieces out there which are very hard, a person should feel extremely accomplished if they can do that." Marc wonders, however, " But if you spent the first half of your school year just building the skills to play that one piece, what have you missed out on? And also, who's in the audience?" Kruse (2020) suggests that "the perception of Eurocentric classical music practices as the highest of 'high art' in many teacher education degree programs has the potential to contribute to teacher bias" against a variety of music

traditions, of which he specifically names "Afrodiasporic music such as Hip-Hop" (p. 28) I think Marc's primary grievance here is that our obsession as a profession with "high music" doesn't always translate to relevant musical experiences for students—a reality he knows well from his years as an undergraduate music education major.

Marc compares the qualities of "egoism" that he sees in music education to his experience as a piano player in the COGIC church growing up: Marc's ascendance to "lead piano player" in church was not the product of competition or assertions of grandeur; Marc thinks of it more as the natural progression of life in the church: the purpose of his role as lead piano player was to serve in the church; and just as Marc had been taken under the wings of the musicians before him, Marc would also be expected to do this for the church's younger musicians.

And yet, Marc also humbly implicates himself in this problem as an early teacher. He returns to my question of how his teaching has changed over the years:

> Learning that it's definitely not about me. None of it's about the teacher. It's all about [what] the students [are] taking away from the experience—what they can *get* rather than, (enter: The Voice) "*Oh, wow. I'm going to wave my arms, and we're going to do this fancy piece*." And I remember doing that earlier on—ordering pieces of music that were much too hard for the students and then making them learn how to do it—which, yes, in the short term, may make the teacher look good to the public. But if the students don't even look like they're enjoying it, it's a loss.

Marc speaks this last line, *it's a loss*, with a quiet, mournful tone. In light of his own experience as a college student who felt disengaged by the musical repertoire he was required not just to perform but to *celebrate*, Marc readily empathizes with students in music classes who might feel similarly. I think Marc would agree with Juliet Hess that the majority of his students do not feel "'at home' in Western classical music" (2015, p. 339). Christopher Small agrees that "this privileging of Western classical music above all other musics is a strange and contradictory

phenomenon," similarly noting that in Western societies, the sales of classical albums makes up about 3% of all record sales (Small, 1998, p. 2). Hess, Small, and Marc all seem to be suggesting that music teachers need to "consider who is in the room" in order to work toward relevant music experiences (Hess, 2015, p. 344).

Marc also worries about students who elect *not* to take music classes on account of what they perceive as irrelevant musical opportunities: "I think one of the biggest things that I'm really disgusted with," Marc explains, is "see[ing] all these other great kids who aren't involved and it's not because they don't like music, it's because *they don't like what you're serving.*" He recounts situations from earlier in his teaching career as the designated "Choral Director at the school" (before he shifted to "music teacher"): students would wander into his classroom with friends during lunch or after school; they'd pick up a guitar or sit down at the piano and then "sing on key with a great voice, great tone, great expression." Marc would ask, "Well why aren't you in chorus?" and the student would respond, "Oh, because I don't like singing 'those' kinds of songs." Marc laments, "It really says a lot when you have people who obviously like to sing [but] they don't want any of 'what you're serving up' … that speaks volumes." Emdin (2016) offers that "once educators recognize that they are biased against forms of brilliance other than their own, they can finally begin to truly teach" (p. 42). I think Marc is reaching toward multiple forms of brilliance in students not only in his current classes, but in the larger student community at his school.

Marc respects students' personal values for music, not just the repertoire that interests them, but also the *ways of engaging in music making* that are of interest to students. As an example, Marc points to the practice of learning to read standard Western music notation as a potential hindrance to music making. I am reminded of the story of Marc's brother, who taught

himself how to play piano by listening to his sister's lessons; in Marc's words his brother "was too young to read but old enough to *hear*." I think about how often we (music educators) equate *reading* symbolic music notation with *being* musical, and how we often see music notation as a prerequisite to such. We forget, conceptually, that music is, first and foremost, an *aural* experience, and that perhaps developing musical sensitivity through aural means is closer than reading symbols to the sensory experience of music in the first place:

> Some folks have this idea that everyone has to learn how to read standard notation. And for the longest time, I had that belief. I would have guitar students show up—this was years ago—ready for a guitar lesson. And you just take the wind out of their sails, hand them the book, and say, "Okay. Here's our E and our F and G, and put your finger here or there," when sometimes all they really wanted to do was learn four or five basic chords so they could go and play along with their parents' Bob Dylan album, for instance. And you know what—why not? What's wrong with strumming chords?

The extent to which Marc respects his students' musical desires in this quote is compelling. In the end, he almost seems to be pleading with the profession—perhaps with the voice of the Ivory Tower—to recognize a greater diversity of purposes for which music making might be valuable to students. He acknowledges that "for some [students], they'll get to that point" of being able to strum chords along with Bob Dylan. "They're happy. [They say], 'Thank you. This is everything I need.'" Marc respects that students' reasons for wanting to be musical are different; he acknowledges that for other guitar students, strumming chords might be "a gateway into learning other things." Rather than teaching from the Ivory Tower—"browbeating them into learning to do things the way I [think is best]"—Marc strives to understand students' musical needs when they enter the classroom. I thought back to the middle school vocal trio I observed and the Motown songs they learned to sing so beautifully in three-part harmony: they didn't need formal music notation to make this moment possible—all they had needed was the track Marc recorded for them. Turino argues that musical situations such as strumming chords to a Bob Dylan song,

"are not just informal or amateur, that is, *lesser* versions of 'real music' made by the pros," but rather "a different form of art and activity entirely" that should be conceptualized and valued as such" (2008, p. 25).

Marc's words in this passage—"for the longest time, I had that belief"—also speak to the insidiousness of the Ivory Tower Voice in its oppression: although he grew up in an aurally rich musical tradition through which he developed an impressive skill set on a variety of instruments, Marc's undergraduate music education still managed to convince him that reading notation was an integral part of being musical. I think back to Marc's reflection on his older brother's early years at the piano—"He wasn't old enough to read, but he was old enough to *hear*"—somewhere along the way, the repeated and contradictory whisperings of the Ivory Tower Voice called this aspect of Marc's musical becoming into question. Berliner suggests that "the varied and subtle ways in which a music culture actually shapes the sensibilities and skills of its members are not always apparent," which seems to fit the shifting beliefs Marc expresses here toward the necessity of music notation (1994, p. 57).

In reflecting on the kinds of open and flexible curricular spaces Marc has come to value in his classroom, I am reminded of a quote from William Ayers's *Becoming a Teacher* that resonates with what I have come to know of Marc and his teaching:

> If you begin with an intentional and abiding faith in your students, if you believe in their innate capacity to learn, to create things, to grow, and to make meaning, if you believe each is capable of both individual and social transformation, curriculum becomes a form of reinventing, re-creating, and re-inscribing—of finding voice—a task that can be accomplished only by free subjects, never by inert objects. Curriculum, then, is a dialogical process in which everyone participates actively as equals—a turbulent, raucous, unpredictable, noisy, and participatory affair, expression and knowledge emerging from the continual interaction of reflection and activity. (Ayers, 2019, p. 41)

When Marc talks about respecting the desires his students have toward the kinds of music making of interest to him—acknowledging that strumming chords to a Bob Dylan is a worthy

goal—I think he is demonstrating the kind of abiding faith in his students that Ayers speaks of here. And rather than hailing the Ivory Tower, Marc's curricular loyalties are to his students and their musical becomings, first and foremost; Marc is open congas in John Denver tunes, strumming chords, learning by ear, and to the possibility that an ensemble might not have or need 30 clarinets.

Comfort with "Shifting"

"If you really look, most people are a mash-up"

Like the ebb and flow of his father's sermons, Marc's identities as teacher and musician are "shifting." An aspect of Marc's teaching that initially piqued my interest was the ways Marc has begun to structure his classes and curriculum. Marc no longer teaches a full schedule of large, rehearsing ensembles—bands and choirs—but has transitioned his classes to a model of "emerging ensembles." I think Marc's word choice in naming these ensembles as "emerging" is powerful: rather than assuming fixed identities in students—"I am a trombone player" or "I am in choir"—an emerging musician is one who is still growing, changing, and becoming. The emergence of a musician or ensemble does not have a predefined outcome in the way that the emergence of a "concert band" does; an ensemble is simply a collection of musicians, the emergence of whom is defined by the doings and beings of such. Marc's emerging ensembles have flexible instrumentation and are not limited to those played in concert bands; some students switch between playing different instruments (and singing) in different contexts. The instrumentation is "emerging" just as is the musicianship of the students. Repertoire selection also emerges as a function of students' choices in these groups. Rather than continuing to follow programming demands made by the Ivory Tower Voice, Marc invites his *students' voices* to take

part in repertoire selection. As I observed during my visit to his classes, Marc's students worked on a variety of pieces they had selected from the Motown genre (a theme chosen by Marc). I think the "chill vibe" I experienced in several of Marc's classes was in part a function of students' repertoire selection and the engagement they experienced in playing songs they enjoyed.

Another shifting Marc has made throughout the 15 years he has spent at his current school was a transition in title from "K-12 *choral* director" to "7-12 *music* teacher." I think what Marc is resisting in his shift to "music teacher" is what he sees as a false dichotomy—or at least an unnecessary divide—between "voice" and "instrument" in his classes. Greene also echoes this worry: "We are still too prone to dichotomize: to think of "disciplines" or "public traditions" or "accumulated wisdom" or "common culture" as objectively existent, external to the knower—there to be discovered, mastered, learned" (Greene, 1971). I think she is talking about the Ivory Tower Voice here in referring to institutionalized values in the form of "public traditions" and "accumulated wisdom." Like Marc, Greene challenges the allegiance our profession pays to these predetermined categories; I think this part of Marc's becoming would have resonated with Maxine.

Marc is also worried about the limits these categories put on the kinds of music making his students imagine for themselves in his class when they are forced to devote all of their energy to one avenue of music making. Marc values and strives to support the choices his students make regarding instruments they play in class; while he acknowledges that "it's great to tell kids they're going to stick with something," Marc also believes that "mak[ing] a person do something they dislike over and over" can also cause students "to hate it." Thus, Marc is open to students who want to try out new instruments in his classes. He humorously recounts the experience of

having several students over the years choose to play the clarinet in 6th grade on account of it being the instrument that Squidward (from Spongebob Squarepants) plays. Marc acknowledges that while an 11-year-old might be legitimately excited about playing the instrument of Squidward, the same student might be less enthusiastic about the same prospect two or three years later. In these cases, Marc is supportive of his students' instrument shiftings. One of these clarinetists, Marc explains, eventually wanted to play percussion as a 13-year-old, yet he was told—perhaps by his parents—that he needed to continue clarinet; yet when Marc learned about the student's interest in percussion, he encouraged the student to switch: "I just feel lucky that at 13," Marc expresses, "we get to have a chance for him to change over to something that he might enjoy."

In our conversations, Marc often dialogues with his own "devil's advocate" or dissenting voice when he expresses his opinions and values. He says things like, "this [other argument] is also valid" and "a person can disagree with me on this" in prefacing his thoughts. Marc personifies the voice of a person who disagrees with his flexible mindset toward the instrumentation and repertoire choices students make in his classes that he supports: "But wait, we can't have that" he says with a playfully mocking tone to an imaginary student who wants to switch instruments. "We made your box. This is your box." Marc illustrates his own stance through responding to this imaginary voice: "Hopefully, we'll help these kids. I don't want to just *break out* of the box; I want to *avoid* the boxes [altogether]." I think the emerging ensembles model is an important way that Marc has helped his students avoid a variety of musical boxes in his classes, especially through instrumentation and repertoire selection. Perhaps avoiding boxes altogether is impossible in that there will always be restrictions placed on any musical setting—time, resources, interest. However, conceptually, I think the band and choir boxes are much

smaller than the "ensemble box"—and I think the Ivory Tower Voice would agree, for as we know (Enter: The Voice): "*Having 30 clarinets in a band is better than having 20.*"

Neither and Both

During one of our earlier conversations, Marc returned a basic question back to me: "What's your primary instrument?" In listening to the recording, I can hear the discomfort in my voice as I stumbled around in my answer to this simple question. "Piano and trumpet," I said, "classical training on both of those instruments … and a little bit of ukulele lately." After observing one of his classes, I had written in my notes, "Marc is an incredible musician! In just a few hours, I heard him play the guitar, electric bass, and drumset quite well." In a lot of ways, Marc is the kind of musician that I *wish* I was—someone who can play a variety of instruments in many different styles, and knows a large repertoire of popular songs, artists, and music histories that other people also know. Being asked such a simple question like "what's your instrument?" by a musician and teacher I had come to admire and respect so much made me feel exposed and inadequate. I was practically apologizing for my own musical background: " … I'm not really into classical music so much anymore … I feel like I need to find myself as a musician' … because I don't really know where I am right now." To my surprise, Marc responded: "I'm glad you said that, because boy I tell you, I feel that way more and more." Elaborating, he continued: "I almost feel like for the past few years I've allowed myself to be pigeonholed into two things: in some circles I'm a 'blues guy,' and in some circles I'm a 'jazz guy.'" In most cases however, Marc says, "I'm neither and both." Hearing Marc say this was comforting, although I still wish I could do one of those things (blues or jazz) half as well as Marc can. "You're a mash-up," I offered. "Yeah," he responded. "But remember, we don't know what to do with mash-ups [in music education]. If you really look, most people are a mash-up."

Marc's words reminded me of my own musical becoming in spite of my sheepishness in being unable to name, label, or categorize my musicianship. Part of becoming is realizing that you're never really "complete"—you're always "neither and both." Part of becoming is also recognizing that there is room for more additions—more ingredients that can be added to what Marc calls "making the stew"—his own metaphor for becoming. Once again, Marc implicates himself in critiquing the "we" that is the profession of music education in his statement, "We don't know what to do with mash-ups;" I think Marc has a pretty good idea though. Through the ways he invites students to bring their uniquenesses to class—shifting instrument preferences, exploring repertoire selection, and developing values around *how* they want to engage in music (i.e., strumming chords)—Marc continually supports his students in their emergence as musical "mash-ups" (Allsup, 2016).

Chapter V

BECOMING CHARLIE

Becoming a Teacher

"When I was in that [music] room, I felt warmth. And I felt like someone cared about me."

Parker Palmer writes that "good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life": they have a "capacity for connectedness," and are "able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world form themselves" (2017, p. 11). As I learned about the musical endeavors of Charlie's childhood and his early inclination toward the profession of teaching, themes of love, care, and connection were central to the stories Charlie told.

Although he grew up in a single-parent home in which money was tight, Charlie's childhood never seemed to lack opportunities to make music with people he loved. "My mom would always have music on at the house," especially if "we were cooking or cleaning." And while his family is financially stable now, Charlie says his mom often recounts these earlier days: "She always tells this story that she had to pick between buying me an electric piano and food. And so she bought me the electric piano, which makes me feel bad. But she did it" on account of the interest he continued to express toward music. Charlie also points to memories of making music with his siblings at home: "We would make these fake radio shows and sing into the mic … we still have these tapes of us being ridiculous!" Music also became an integral aspect of Charlie's relationship with his grandparents, who eventually introduced him to the tradition of fiddle playing that was woven through generations of his family history: "My great-grandfather was in the Fiddler's Hall of Fame" in Osceola, NY, Charlie recounts with pride.

Throughout several of our conversations, Charlie points to his elementary music teacher as having been most influential in his becoming a musician and a teacher. Knowing his mother could afford neither the money nor time for piano lessons, this music teacher gifted both to Charlie:

> She would stay after school and teach me piano for no cost at all. And I think I always knew, by the time I started piano, that I wanted to go into music and be a music teacher just because—I don't know—when I was in that room, I felt warmth. And I felt like someone cared about me.

Charlie traces his initial career inclinations to an educator whose love and teaching extended far beyond the walls of the music classroom: "She would come pick me up and take me to concerts, drive back to my house, and then go back to the other side of [the city] to go home. She was so dedicated to providing these experiences for me." In addition to offering so much of her time to Charlie outside of school to care for him and expose him to musical opportunities, Charlie's music teacher also protected Charlie in a time of need. Although a high-achieving student, Charlie had a teacher in fifth grade who continually graded his work poorly. "I had a really big problem when I was in middle school," Charlie remembers. "I was kind of being bullied by a teacher—which sounds really weird to say—but I was. It went up all the way to the Board of Education." Throughout the entire process, Charlie's elementary music teacher advocated for and defended him. "She lost a lot of friends because of it," Charlie remembers, "because she took sides with a student." The significance of his teacher's act of protection is not lost on Charlie today; looking back, he has an even stronger appreciation for the ways his music teacher helped him heal during this time: "She could see that I was so—I don't want to say "depressed" as a fifth grader—But *I was depressed as a fifth grader* because I was being bullied by my teacher." Charlie still communicates with his childhood music teacher regularly and views her as a formative figure for his development as a musician, teacher, and person.

Charlie also points to other music teachers throughout his K-12 years as continuing to fuel his musical motivation. He recalls similar qualities of care and support in his middle school band teacher, which motivated his continued participation: "I had a really, *really* great band teacher in middle school," Charlie reflects. "I just remember every single time I wanted to go to my band lessons, and he just made you feel like you're special, even though—" Charlie pauses and chuckles: "I was not a good percussion player at all … but whenever I went there, [I was] like 'I'm so good!'" The warmth Charlie received from his band director was crucial: "I think the biggest thing that I noticed is that he actually cared about the students and he wanted to build connections and relationships with them." Charlie continues to look back on music teachers like these having been influential in both his becoming a musician and an educator. "I guess that's kind of why I went into teaching … because of how I was treated." he reflects, "I wanted to give that back."

I think Maxine Greene had music teachers like Charlie's in mind when she wrote that the moral life is "best characterized as a life of reflectiveness and care, a life of the kind of wide-awakeness associated with full attention to life and its requirements" (1978, p. 152). Through their care and devotion to the whole of Charlie's becoming, these teachers viewed him as more than a "music student" in their classes; they treated him as a human—they cared that he learned his major and minor scales, but they also cared about his mental and emotional wellbeing. They'd hoped he would return to class having practiced his instruments, but they also hoped he'd had time to rest. They acknowledged the realities of Charlie's life outside their classrooms—the financial challenges his family faced, his being bullied by a teacher at school—and came to his aid when he needed them the most. "The power of our mentors is not necessarily in the models of good teaching they gave us," Palmer suggests. "Their power is in their capacity to awaken a

truth within us, a truth we can reclaim years later by recalling their impact on our lives" (2017, p. 22). These teachers helped Charlie discover the "teacher's heart" within himself, which continued to beat with care and compassion for his students throughout my interactions with Charlie in this study.

Pine Ridge as a Teaching Context

"'This is going to be a learning curve, especially because you are White.' She was not wrong."

Charlie is currently in his fourth year of teaching; he has taught Pine Ridge Central School (pseudonym) for two years and was a few days away from obtaining his Master's degree[1] on the date of our final interview conversation during my spring 2020 semester of data collection. At Pine Ridge, Charlie teaches middle school general music and choir, as well as high school choir and individual voice lessons. He was also in the process of directing a school musical during the time of our work together.

As a contextual space, Pine Ridge presents a unique set of questions for teachers like Charlie who strive toward culturally responsive practices: the student population is comprised of 63% Native American students (most of whom live on a nearby reservation), 31.5% White students, 4% Multiracial students, and 1.5% Latinx students. While I continue to struggle with the overly-generalized categorization of Charlie's students as "Native American" in this chapter, I have done so in order to protect the identities of all persons involved in this document. Many of my conversations with Charlie included sensitive information about his teaching community; Charlie was open and honest with me about some of the more challenging aspects of teaching at

[1] Charlie did not complete his Master's degree at the researcher's (my) institution, Teachers College, Columbia University.

his school (which I detail later in this chapter). If I use more specific language in naming his Native American students' identities (i.e., the name of the reservation where they reside, the name of the language they speak, the names of some of the clan elders referred to in this document, etc.), the privacy of participants in this chapter will be compromised because the location of the school will become easily traceable. Out of respect to Charlie as my research participant, to the members of his school community, and in compliance with the consent agreements approved by the Institutional Review Board, I have redacted the more specific, culturally-identifying names in this document. When I refer to Charlie's students as "Native American" in this document, I do not intend for the label or ideas to refer to Native Americans of various tribes and clans across North America; I refer specifically to the cultural practices of Charlie's community of students, albeit with a generalized name.

Throughout his time at Pine Ridge, Charlie continues to learn of the stark contrasts in life experiences of students in the two dominant racial groups at the school: Native American students and White students; the uniqueness of these students' perspectives often come into conflict in ways that must be grappled with by community members on a daily basis. In addition to Pine Ridge Central School—the K-12 building divided into elementary, middle, and high school sections where Charlie teaches—the district also houses a separate elementary school for Native American students that is located on the reservation. Students who attend the Native American elementary school are integrated into Pine Ridge Central School in 6th grade.

During our initial correspondences, Charlie told me that his principal would likely sign off on my consent forms without any perceived issues; Pine Ridge is accustomed to having researchers on campus. While Charlie's principal did not respond to any of my email correspondences, phone calls, or voice messages, we managed to catch her mid-walk in the

hallway during one of my visits to the school. As is often the case with administrators, it seemed that Charlie's principal had much on her mind this afternoon; after extending a handshake and formal "welcome" to me, she signed my consent forms and began to inch away from us in continuation down the hallway. "Oh, and did you see my email?" Charlie asked; a blank stare showed she had not. Charlie reiterated his request for permission to miss his after-school PLC meeting that day in order to lead a dress rehearsal for the school musical—opening night was just a few evenings away. His principal was hesitant, and after a minute of meandering statements to the effect of, "I'd rather you didn't," she reluctantly consented, stipulating that he needed to check in with a team member afterwards. As we walked back to Charlie's classroom, he told me, "If I were a coach and not a music teacher, there wouldn't have been any hesitation—but that's just the culture up here." Charlie seemed to shrug this thought away quickly and our conversation returned to his students.

In describing his school, Charlie notes that the student population is "very, very diverse," and then backpedals: "Well, not *diverse*. But we do have more than just White students," a seemingly uncommon feature for schools in the area. In revising his use of this word, "diverse," in conversation, I think Charlie is reckoning with what Robin DiAngelo refers to as "coded terms," words that often soften or disguise the racial realities of a situation (2018, p. 43). Oftentimes when White people (including myself) refer to schools as "diverse," what they really mean is "there aren't a lot of White people here." At the international school in Korea where I taught for six years, the administration and business executives spent a good deal of time recruiting "diversity" to this school; in our case, diversity meant "non-Korean" students, since Koreans made up the dominant student population. Rather than "diverse" meaning the coming together of a wide variety of races and cultures, "diverse" is often used to mean "the

dominant/privileged race is not in the majority here." I think Charlie's linguistic revision in this passage shows he is aware of the ways the word "diverse" is often used as a code.

Having said this, however, the racial makeup of Charlie's school *is* unique, especially given that most schools in rural, upstate New York are composed of mostly White student populations (as is true of the other teaching contexts discussed in this dissertation). I think back to Charlie's initial comment about how Pine Ridge was accustomed to having researchers on campus and wondered if the demographic make-up of the school was, at surface-level, much of what made Pine Ridge alluring; I wonder if the uniqueness of many of the Native American students' lifestyles might also account for researcher attention. Most of the Native American students live on a reservation nearby and maintain a variety of distinct cultural features such as cuisine, clothing and hairstyles. I wonder about the visibility of the Native American culture and its distinct geographical borderlines—are these discreet, easily definable boundaries around "culture" also part of what interests researchers?

Whetung and Wakefield (2019) are explicit in their criticism of research as possessing colonizing power: "If we look at the history of "research" and the exploitation of people in and through research, it is a story about power, but it is also a story about disembeddedness;" the authors argue that "the impetus to acquire knowledge" is in many ways "the exact same impetus for colonizing, which is to just look outward and grab a bunch of stuff from other places and try to make it legible to yourself, without necessarily having to be a part of it" (p. 150). To be clear, I know nothing about any of these researchers at Charlie's school—nothing of the work they are doing, nor of what knowledge they seek to acquire. And yet, I found myself wondering about my own role as a researcher in relation to Charlie's school. Although Charlie, himself, is the focus of my dissertation work, the Indigenous cultures of Charlie's students have inevitably become an

important part of Charlie's becoming as a teacher in this context; and by extension, my relation to Charlie's teaching context in this document cannot go unexamined.

Early in our conversations around the cultural situatedness of his teaching context, Charlie described his school as embracing the Native American students' culture and "their whole identity:"

> We have Native American Day at our school, where we celebrate—it's a whole day where we have people from the tribe come in and they talk to us about the history, and we have a bunch of demonstrations. We have social dancing. They make traditional Native American foods, like corn soup and the strawberry drink.

And yet as our conversations on the topic deepened, Charlie seemed to be calling his own words into question: did Pine Ridge really celebrate their Native American students' *whole* identities? In learning about Charlie's school context in conversation with him, I found myself often recalling my own teaching experience in Korea. Like Pine Ridge, my school had quite few days dedicated to cultural celebrations throughout the year: Chuseok ("Thanksgiving") for Korean students in the early fall, Diwali for Indian students in early November, Chinese (or "Lunar") New Year in February, and a variety of others. These celebrations would often include traditional clothing worn by students, musical performances and dances during assemblies, and dedicated meals in the cafeteria for each holiday. Like many of my students in Korea who identified strongly with their cultural heritage, Charlie describes his Native American students as being eager to discuss their cultural attributes: "They are very, very proud," he explains. "If you mention anything about their culture, they will inform you on anything. They like talking about it."

It is evident from our conversations that Charlie has been seeking to understand his students through the genuine interest he expresses in their lives since he arrived at Pine Ridge; his endeavors to understand and take interest in his students as whole people feels reminiscent of

the kinds of relationships Charlie had with his own music teachers growing up. He recalls some of the early conversations he had with students when he arrived at the school, however, reflecting on his surprise at *their surprise* when he continued to ask his Native American students about their lives outside of school:

> I don't know if that's something they don't get to hear a lot … I [guess] it goes to show that a lot of teachers in our district don't really talk about the Native American side of things. They acknowledge it, but they don't have discussions about culture with [students]. They have no idea what their personal lives are like.

Charlie's word choice in this quote resonates with my own teaching experiences in which culture was readily "acknowledged" through celebrations and surface-level explorations of external aspects of culture, yet rarely examined in fuller ways. How did the cultural identities of my Korean and Japanese students manifest themselves out on the playground during recess? How might my Chinese students' parents view the student-created notation systems we used in fourth grade general music? I wonder about these "researchers" who are interested in Pine Ridge—which aspects of Native American culture are they interested in? How might they characterize the cultural divide lines at Pine Ridge? In my own experience, tensions between cultural ways of thinking and being at school often appeared between the lines of text on the glossy brochures filled with diversity statistics and photos of students in native clothing. I think Charlie is reaching for something deeper with his students.

Indigenous writer and storyteller, Thomas King recounts his experience being invited to speak on an "Indian Awareness Week" panel at a university in California; "Indian Awareness Week" was also followed by "Black Awareness Week" and "Chicano Awareness Week," all of which was then followed, King narrates, by an unacknowledged 49 weeks of "White Awareness" (King, 2005, p. 62). DiAngelo (2018) agrees that when minorities and marginalized peoples are celebrated in disembedded contexts such as "Awareness Weeks" and "Native American Days,"

when conversations about these groups are centered around who people are and how they exist outside of conversations around privilege and power structures, White privilege is reinforced (pp. 26-27). Institutions leading these efforts at multicultural celebrations—which are most often made up of White people—must acknowledge and grapple with the fact that their privilege in society is what necessitates these cultural celebrations in the first place: did Native American Day at Charlie's school also include conversations about White privilege or about how the colonization of White settlers in the United States is what has led to the need for a designated holiday? Again, to be clear, I do not know whether or not the administration at Pine River addresses White privilege explicitly with students; Charlie did not mention this in his discussion of the celebrations, and I did not ask. But I confess, I am doubtful.

Not only do surface-level celebrations of culture mask the insidious forces of power and their efforts of self-preservation at stake, events such as these often serve to maintain static versions of cultural identity. In his essay entitled, "You're not the Indian I had in mind," King tells the story of Edward Sheriff Curtis, whom he describes as one of the most famous Native American photographers, having published over 2,200 photos: "Curtis was looking for the literary Indian," King explains, "the dying Indian, the imaginative construct;" and to ensure he found the kinds of "Indians" he sought, "Curtis took along boxes of "Indian" paraphernalia—wigs, blankets, painted backdrops, clothing—in case he ran into Indians who did not look as the Indian was supposed to look" (2005, p. 34). Similarly, Angela Davis describes this concept of multiculturalism as "acquired a quality akin to spectacle" (1996, p. 45). To be clear, I do not wish to suggest that Charlie's school is involved in the business of directly enforcing the kind of oppressive authority of cultural expression illustrated in King's story. However, as King suggests, I do believe that relegating culture to the events of a Native American culture day—in

spite of good intentions—serves to preserve antiquated versions of culture. “Native culture, as with any culture, is a vibrant, changing thing, and when Curtis happened upon it, it was changing from what it had been to what it would become next,” King explains. However, Curtis insisted on capturing and preserving his own, colonized version of “Indian” in these photos: “The idea of “the Indian” was already fixed in time and space” (King, 2005, p. 37). In other words, celebrations that only serve to preserve traditional identities do not allow for the becoming of the persons involved.

The divisions between racial groups at Pine Ridge—namely the Native American and White students—are a historical mark of the school. The 1980’s marked a series of riots at Pine Ridge and Charlie has several colleagues who remember teaching during this time. Although the school administration seems to have worked to mitigate some of these conflicts over the years through an increased attention to Native American culture and a greater appreciation for the needs of Native American students, Charlie notes that significant tensions still exist. “There is a clashing between the non-Native American students—the White kids, essentially—because they feel that if anything were to happen at the school, it’s always based on what the Native American students want … they feel like they’re not being heard as much.” This characterization of students’ responses is another indication that White students at Charlie’s school lack an understanding of their own privileged position in society and throughout history in relation to their Native American classmates: “White history is the *norm* for history,” DiAngelo explains (2018, p. 27); being heard is is the norm for White students throughout North American history, such that when any amount of normalized privileges of such are taken away, White students are shaken. Again, I wonder if this is another symptom of discussions of privilege and power as being absent from celebrations of Native American identity at Charlie’s school.

Charlie explains that students at the school often "stick within their culture," such that friend groups are often racially homogenous, which is increasingly evident in places like the school cafeteria. Charlie identifies differences between his students in socioeconomic status as being a common source of racist comments made by members of the two groups that he hears in passing: "Some of the richer White kids will make fun of the Native American students who live in trailers . . . and they call them 'poor kids.'" Similarly, he explains, Native American students may distance themselves from White students, narrating the sentiment, "Oh, look at this rich kid …" While some of the students do intermingle, socially, Charlie acknowledges these interactions as outliers, pointing to a Native American student whom he knows particularly well: "She branches out and hangs out with everybody, but she's also seen as kind of an outsider." Charlie perceives that this student is "looked down on by the fact that she does mingle 'outside her kind,'" and pauses to reflect on how bad it feels to put this observation into words.

Charlie also considers the challenges students from the Native American elementary school face when they enter Pine Ridge Central School in 6th grade. Although two of the 6th grade teachers are Native American, Charlie acknowledges the difficult transition these students often face: "They hate it so much because it's so different from what they're used to." Unlike Pine Ridge, the reservation school has all Native American students and a larger proportion of Native American teachers; the cafeteria serves primarily Native American cuisine, the school culture on the whole, Charlie suggests, is more compatible with reservation life. Charlie suggests that it is common for students from the Native American elementary school to leave Pine Ridge Central School mid-year for other public middle schools in the area. He also perceives resentment from White students at Pine Ridge toward the idea of an exclusively Native

American school: “The kids tell me ‘no White kids are allowed to go to the Native American school,’ so I don’t know … I think the White kids get offended by that.”

DiAngelo (2018) explains that when racism is viewed as “discrete acts committed by individual people” rather than as “complex, interconnected system” of power and privilege that extends back to the beginning of U.S. history, White people often feel *they* are the victims of racism (pp. 3-4). Yet, she clarifies that racism, or one’s ability to be racist, is by definition a phenomenon of power wielded specifically by people who are part of the groups that dominate power. “When I say that only Whites can be racist, I mean that in the United States, only Whites have the collective social and institutional power and privilege over people of color” (p. 22). Thus, while Charlie might also observe prejudice acts and racially-charged language spoken by Native American students toward White students at his school— “oh, that rich kid…”—this is not “reverse-racism,” as some White people have taken to saying these days. Charlie’s Native American students do not have the institutional or societal power to enforce long-term disadvantage—racism—on their White classmates.

In his own classroom, Charlie wrestles with the idea of being a culturally responsive teacher in the midst of these divisions between groups of his students. While striving to invite and include the musical traditions of his Native American students in their curriculum, Charlie wonders: “What do you do with the other kids who are not part of that culture?” What Charlie perceives as “a really great learning experience” with Native American music, for example, is often met with a lack of enthusiasm from White students, and sometimes even disdain. Charlie perceives “a negative attitude that stems from their parents [and] grandparents about the Native American community” in many of his White students when they explore Native American music. “How do you fix that?” he asks, with a hint of exasperation in his voice. And although he

has yet to find a solution for this kind of hostility on the part of his White students, Charlie has continually sought to understand his Native American students both as people and as musicians in his classroom.

As a young White teacher who possesses what I would consider an "above average" understanding of his Whiteness and the ways racism is embedded in his teaching context for a young teacher, Charlie posed the questions above with a sense of urgency. Because Charlie understands (in part) the socially-embedded nature of the racism in his classroom—hundreds of years of power and learned behaviors—he feels at a loss in knowing how to foster a sense of community in his classroom while also working toward curricular equity. And as a White teacher who also strives toward equity in my own classroom, I empathize with these feelings of exasperation, of discouragement, of not knowing how work toward anti-racist pedagogy and curricular endeavors in my own, small classroom context, amid the vastness of the societal racism and privilege that structure the student relationships at Charlie's school.

In answer to these questions, Sandra Styres (2019) suggests that developing discourses around race, power, and colonialism with students is paramount. Styres wonders about the kinds of classroom discussions that might be fostered, for example, upon considering questions about the land they inhabit: "Whose traditional lands are they on at this moment? How have they come to be in this place? What is their relationship to the land they are on right now?" (2019, p. 32). And while approaches to questions such as these must inevitably be tailored to students depending on their developmental ages and emotional maturity, DiAngelo (2018) critiques the commonly held idea that children are too young or naive to understand concepts of power and privilege, that children have a more sophisticated understanding of race than we adults think (pp.

84-85). Helping students understand the ways in which racial hierarchies exist in their communities seems to be an important piece of Charlie's (and my) questions.

In Search of Culture Bearers

In striving to work toward culturally-responsive and inclusive ends as a teacher, Charlie has made himself a *student* to several Native American culture bearers: students in his classes, a faculty colleague, and a local Native American musician who lives on the reservation. Each of these people has been influential to Charlie's becoming a culturally-responsive educator in different ways; each has shown Charlie different pieces of their lived realities in ways that have expanded his own view of Pine Ridge as a teaching context.

As a function of his small general music class sizes—8-12 students—Charlie has found this setting to be particularly clarifying in getting to know his students. In addition to inviting students to reflect on and talk about music of their own choosing, Charlie tries to open up a forum for discussing other aspects of Native American culture in these classes. In particular, some of his general music classes are composed of all Native American students, settings which he has found most conducive to discussion. "We talk about some of the social dancing, some of their bigger-meaning objects like gustowehs (male headdress) or their moccasins, or the different animals that the tribe represents. We have these discussions a lot, especially in my more heavily-based Native American classes." Charlie emphasizes his genuine interest in learning about Native American culture—"I'm very interested in it; I want to know"—while also acknowledging, "I don't want to be the person in the room who may have said something that's culturally inappropriate or offends somebody without knowing."

Charlie formed an especially close bond with one of these middle school general music students, Ákat, who seems to have taken it upon herself to fill Charlie in on important aspects of

Native American culture. Charlie reminds me that I met this student at the beginning of his middle school chorus rehearsal and that she was likely the student who spoke the most about Native American culture as it related to the song they were rehearsing. "She's very shy in a normal class setting," Charlie explains, "but if it's in context to a Native American [topic], she will definitely answer." He reflects on having Ákat in class for the past two years:

> When I first came to [Pine Ridge], I had her in my class and I had no idea, and she knew that, and some of the other kids were using terms in [the Indigenous language] that I definitely didn't understand, so she wanted to make sure that I understood. And so she stayed after class one time and she just talked to me a little bit about her culture just so I knew what was happening. Because some of [the students] were using words that are not appropriate for Native American culture, so she wanted to make sure I knew those words.

Charlie is grateful for Ákat's language lessons and acknowledges, "She's been a really big help to me." While these conversations were initially focused on helping Charlie survive and respond to some of the immediate cultural barriers in class, Ákat also began to seek Charlie out as a teacher she trusted to talk about other concerns. "She would also come during her lunch and eat with me and just talk to me. It wasn't always just about culture; it was also about life too … what life is like on the reservation, and the struggles there." Charlie describes these conversations as "really eye-opening:"

> I don't know the whole story, but she did allude to the fact that her father was in prison … a lot of people on the reservation are going through the same struggle that she is, where they have parents who are incarcerated … I had no idea that it was a vast majority of their population whose families do face criminal charges or have a family member that is in jail or in prison … that was the first time that I looked at the other side, that some of these lives that they have are just—they're really bad.

According to the census data for New York State in 2010, the ratio of incarcerated Native Americans (people who identified as "American Indian Alone") is approximately 700 for every 100,000, a ratio almost three times as high as those of incarcerated Whites (250 per 100,000).[2]

[2] Prison Policy Initiative, United States Census Bureau (2010)

Charlie reflects on his former ignorance to this information and identifies his own position at the school as one of "the White kids:" "I always thought 'they have their own land, casinos, they're doing their own thing." Yet through his conversations with Ákat, Charlie began to awaken to these hardships from the perspective of a 7th grader.

Charlie's own home life as a self-described "White kid" growing up in rural New York was different in so many ways from Ákat's or his other Native American students. But Charlie shares with some of his students the experience of growing up with a single parent; he knows his own version of growing up with a struggling single parent and little money to spare. I think back to Charlie's mother trying to decide between an electric piano for Charlie or food for the family; I wonder if these experiences have helped Charlie to empathize with his Native American students who might also come from single parent homes where money is tight. I wonder if Charlie discusses these parts of himself with students. I wonder if this part of his past has helped Charlie to connect with students like Ákat in ways that are meaningful for them.

Another culture bearer from whom Charlie sought advice upon arriving at Pine Ridge is a teacher named Kalin. When he arrived at Pine Ridge as a second-year teacher, the Indigenous language teacher, Kalin, introduced herself to Charlie: "If you have any questions, feel free to reach out—I'm here at all times," he remembers." Kalin also extended her offer with a warning: "This is going to be a learning curve for you, especially because you're White"; and reflecting on these words, Charlie said to me, "She was not wrong." In the beginning, Kalin, like Ákat, helped Charlie with a few basic cultural survival skills: sounds of letters in his students' Indigenous language, pronunciation of his students' names, and recognition of a few expletives that his students might try to use. "I was definitely drowning for a little bit," Charlie reflects, "but she helped me as much as she could." As I recall Charlie's story of being new to Pine Ridge, I am

reminded that perceiving a "learning curve," as Kalin suggests, is a choice that is actively made by teachers who view their work and identities as becoming. Charlie could have chosen to ignore Kalin's words, to "teach as he was taught," and to ignore the uniqueness of Pine Ridge as a contextual space. Another person in Charlie's place might have viewed their teaching identity as fixed, less malleable, and less open; yet Charlie seems to have taken Kalin's words seriously in the context of his becoming by exhibiting the desire to learn and grow as a teacher at Pine Ridge.

Eventually, Charlie began to understand Kalin's role within the school beyond her position as the Native American teacher; he affectionately describes her as "the Godfather" and "the elder in the school" whom many of the Native American students turn to for advice. He remembers calling her in the middle of a class once to inquire about a Native American word spoken by a student: "Send [the student] to me right now," she instructed. Charlie laughs as he recounts this memory, continuing with the Godfather metaphor: "She takes care of business for me." Kalin is strict: "If a student is acting up in her class—she knows most of their parents—she'll call the parents and put them on speaker phone and have a conversation in front of the class." In awe of these seemingly extreme measures, Charlie concludes, "She's ruthless; but she gets the job done, and the kids really respect her for that." After teaching at Pine Ridge for nearly two years, Charlie explains that he now seeks Kalin's help less frequently, but is grateful for the support he received from people like Kalin and his student Ákat in the beginning; these people were formative in helping Charlie learn to connect with his students and reach toward understandings of his students as whole people.

Mother Song

Around the end of his first year at Pine Ridge, Charlie became aware of a prominent musician in the Native American community whom I am calling "Mother Song" in this

document. While Mother Song's real name marks her specific clan association, I use "Mother" to indicate her status in the community as a respected, elder figure, and "Song" to show her social role as "musician" in the community. While the title, "musician," might be held as a more personal facet of one's personal identity or vocation in Western cultures (Turino, 2008), Mother Song plays an active role in the public events of her community as a musician and also leads a group of Native American women singers.

Initially, Charlie met Mother Song at a school graduation ceremony where she had been asked by the administration to perform. After teaching at Pine Ridge for nearly a year, Charlie remembers wanting to incorporate some Native American music into his classroom but didn't know where to begin; he was skeptical that sources like J.W. Pepper, for example, would lead to music experiences that felt even remotely relevant for his students. When he met Mother Song, however, Charlie was excited about the potential for learning about the music of his students' heritage from a culture-bearing source. After a few casual conversations at school events, Charlie reached out to Mother Song about the possibility of collaborating with his choirs the following school year. Charlie recalls that Mother Song, while sincerely enthusiastic about the idea of working with the Pine Ridge choirs, was also taken aback by his invitation. When Charlie learned from Mother Song that none of the previous music teachers at Pine Ridge had reached out to her despite her frequent performances at school events, Charlie was shocked: "Her music is so good and she's so wonderful," Charlie told me, clarifying, "Well, she's underrated. She's like this hidden gem in [upstate New York] that only really the Native American culture and the students at Pine Ridge know about."

After finding Mother Song's Youtube channel online, I began to listen, working my way through dozens of her songs, recorded performances, and a live streamed Facebook concert for

her friends and family during the summer 2020 COVID-19 quarantines. Mother Song's warm and gentle voice appears to match the kind, soft-spoken woman who appears in her videos—the whisper that commanded the respect of Charlie's 80 middle school choristers. Most of Mother Song's works are performed in an a capella setting with a simple rhythmic accompaniment tapped on her lap, drum, or rattle. Some of her songs are from the Native American tradition while others are her original works, performed in both English and the Indigenous language. I am particularly captivated by the songs she writes, many of which tell stories of her own life and of others who live on the reservation: depictions of growing up in large families, husbands who travel far away for work each week, mothers who witness their children's coming of age, families who persevere through poverty and harsh winters. Several of Mother Song's videos also feature a group of Native American women singers from the reservation and feel more oriented toward social justice: these songs address issues of domestic violence within Native American communities and seem to be a direct call for men to respect women and celebrate their strengths. As I listened to song after song on Mother Song's channel, I couldn't help feeling that a third person had somehow joined Charlie and me in conversation throughout this chapter of my dissertation: I wanted to know—to hear—more from her.

As I reflect on Charlie's description of Mother Song as a "hidden gem," a description that resonated with my own experience in discovering her music, I am reminded of my Whiteness. To the Native American clan of which Mother Song is a part, she is a gem—a musician whose artistic offerings play an integral role in public life and society on the reservation. Yet to the dominant group—White people who inhabit rural, upstate New York like Charlie and me—who exist outside of the reservation, she is "hidden." Mother Song's music is hidden by our privilege and positioning, hidden by our own musical traditions and icons, hidden by our own ignorance.

When Charlie and I began talking in February, Mother Song had been present in his classroom twice and was scheduled for another visit that was eventually canceled during the first week of COVID-19 school shutdowns in New York. Mother Song's first visit to the Pine Ridge middle school chorus rehearsal of 80 students was a moment of awakening for Charlie: "The chorus rehearsal ran much better than how it usually does because—well, you were there—[they're] just constantly talking." He explains that although "Mother Song is a really soft-spoken woman, you could hear her whispering because the Native American kids just respect her that much." Charlie remembers that as Mother Song began to introduce the piece she planned for the choir to learn together, the Native American students asked if she might first take a request: they wanted her to sing one of her most popular songs, which was also an original work. The moments that followed were formative and awe-inspiring for Charlie; as he looked around the room during Mother Song's performance, he saw his Native American students sitting quietly, clearly enraptured by her singing: "They were mouthing the words and some of them were humming along," Charlie remembers. "It was incredible … it took my breath away." In this moment of deep student engagement, Charlie began to realize the significance of Mother Song both as a cultural figure for his Native American students and as a bearer of Native American music: "She's a celebrity. They love her. They're all related to her. So she's very well-respected." In reflecting on the memory, Charlie concludes, "This is something that needs to happen more often. I will not forget that moment." I think Charlie is describing his experience of these gem-like qualities he spoke about in reference to Mother Song earlier in our conversation: that perhaps hidden behind her less privileged status as a Native American in society, and perhaps even hidden behind her gentle and soft-spoken demeanor, Mother Song refracts love,

compassion, and justice through her music in ways that resonate deeply for Charlie's Native American students.

When I asked Charlie how his White students responded to Mother Song's visit to chorus, his words seemed to embody the tone of a sigh … "I don't think [the White students] were particularly interested in anything," surmising that "they just thought it was another thing to appease the Native Americans. So—" he paused. "I don't know." Continuing, Charlie shared:

> I like having Mother Song come in because I think that the stuff she's doing is wonderful, and the [Native American] kids, they love her. And the music that we're learning is really interesting, too, and there's so much history behind it and so much meaning in their culture, but [with] the kids [for whom] it has no meaning, they don't really care and they just want to sing pop songs. I try to find a balance.

I wondered what I might have noticed of Charlie's White middle school students' responses to Mother Song on that first visit: were they overtly rude or more tacitly disengaged? Did they turn to face Mother Song with attentive posture, or were they slouched over, covertly checking their phones? Charlie points to the body language of some of his White students as seeming to be indicative of their apathy:

> There was definitely a difference between how the Native American kids were watching Mother Song and how the White kids were watching Mother Song. The White kids were still talking with each other … there was no talking from the Native American students … [Overall] there was a big shift in how the Native Americans acted, but there wasn't really so much of a shift on how the White kids acted.

I recall Charlie's words at the beginning of our conversation on racial divides at Pine Ridge and his perception of the White students as "feel[ing] like they're not heard as much." I wonder, what *would* make a White student "feel heard?" I wonder with Charlie, what might a classroom that is culturally responsive to all of the middle school chorus students—Native American, White, Latinx, Multiracial—look and feel like? I wonder if this "balance" Charlie is trying to strike between the varying interests of his students is even possible to achieve. I also wonder if trying

to balance divergent interests will always cause groups of students, at some point or another, to feel "unheard." The Native American students feel heard when they sing Mother Song's music in chorus and perhaps the White students feel heard when they are allowed to sing pop songs; I wonder, is a shared sense of "being heard" even possible in the context of such distinct cultural groups who are separated by the hierarchy of privilege? Is there a way the two groups might find a way of making music together—perhaps something new, something of their own—that would foster "heard-ness" for all of the students in Charlie's choir? And yet Styres (2019) and DiAngelo (2018) remind me that Charlie's White students are already "heard" in more ways than they know or can imagine.

In small ways, I observed Charlie's verbal responsiveness to individual students in his general music classes that I imagine might help his students feel (literally) heard during class. Charlie often speaks and responds to his students in a relaxed yet frank manner, addressing their comments directly in an almost adult-like way; he responds directly to questions and comments no matter how serious or silly they might be and doesn't ignore these questions when asked without a raised hand. "Where is the F-chord?" Charlie asked one of his classes as they reviewed a sequence on the ukulele. "Did you say the 'F-word?'" asked a student. Charlie: "No, (smiling), the F-*chord*." Student: It sounds like you're saying the F-word." Charlie: "Nope." On several occasions, Charlie took time to make his students aware of disrespectful behavior, which he often called out directly: "Tell me why I'm not happy with your behaviors today," he asked a class near the end of the period. A student raised his hand and said something I couldn't hear. "That's funny, I'll give you that," Charlie said, "but that's not the point." He rearticulated the question and waited for a suitable answer. At one point, Charlie expressed his disappointment with the whole class: "I can see that we've had a hard time choosing our seats freely," and began

directing specific students to various seat assignments in the front two rows. “Are you sure that’s a good idea?” a student asked about a particular student pairing. “I don’t know,” Charlie said, “we’re going to find out.” One of my favorite class interactions occurred when Charlie and his general music students were discussing the idea of a “tutorial” as it related to learning songs on Youtube at home. “Nice, Justin, that was a very good explanation,” Charlie said. He asked the class another question and Justin’s hand shot up once again to answer: “Justin, thanks for the enthusiasm, but I want to see if anyone else wants to answer.” Charlie responded. “But no one else is raising their hands,” Justin said, then turned around from the front row to face his classmates, scanning for interested hands: “Do you guys want to answer?” No one raised their hands. “Ok, that’s fair,” Charlie said with a smile. “Go ahead, and answer, Justin.” I appreciate the ways Charlie interacts with his students in these general music classes; he responds to their comments directly and in ways that show he is listening to them.

Pushing Back Against Censorship

“This is the music in their lives … No offense to Beethoven, but—he’s dead.”

I continue to ponder Mother Song and her overwhelmingly positive reception from Native American students in Charlie’s middle school chorus; I am also reminded of Charlie’s words at the beginning of our conversation: “Our school embraces [Native American] culture and [students’] whole identities.” While most of Charlie’s administration was enthusiastic about his idea of a choral collaboration with Mother Song, his principal’s response was lukewarm. Exhibiting a similar reaction to the one I observed upon meeting her at Pine Ridge—hesitance toward Charlie’s request to miss the PLC for a dress rehearsal—Charlie recalls that his principal “didn’t seem to love the idea.” As he pursued the topic with her further, Charlie eventually

discovered that his principal was uncomfortable with a specific subset of Mother Song's songs: the ones about domestic abuse. "She wanted to make sure that the music [Mother Song] was teaching our students was not *that* music," he eventually realized. In reflecting on his principal's discomfort, Charlie is at a loss for understanding:

> A lot of people have used music as a way to share their stories or talk about what they've gone through. And to say, 'No, this is bad, it talks about what people have gone through, their struggles'—It was mind-boggling to me … Because I'm sure there are people who can relate in that classroom to some of the things that [Mother Song] wrote about—but she doesn't get to share that with us. And that's really sad. Because she used music to get through that situation. And that's a prime example of how music is powerful and helps us work through things.

I wonder if Charlie might also be remembering his middle school days as he says this—being bullied by one of his teachers and seeking refuge in the music classrooms of teachers who radiated warmth. Charlie describes his principal's reaction as "disheartening, but not surprising."

As an outsider to Pine Ridge, I feel a kind of discouragement that I imagine might be similar to what Charlie expresses in these words: I ask, with Charlie, "Why?" Why would his principal seek to remove possibilities for empathy and understanding—potential for grappling with real issues in personal ways? Why would she disavow the idea that thinking about music about domestic abuse might positively shape the way these pre-adults think about their own places in society, how they might re-imagine their own future selves as lovers, partners, family members, and parents? I know Maxine would have been disheartened too. "Of all our cognitive capacities," she writes, "imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions" (Greene, 1995, p. 3).

As I listen again to Mother Song's music, sung by the same group of women singers who are featured in several of her videos, I also hear these words of Maxine's; I think Mother Song's

music is a direct call to her people—men *and* women—to break free from the patterns of abuse that have been normalized. In a music video created by the film production students at Charlie's school, an opening statistic floats across the screen: "Today, Native women experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence: one in three Native American women are sexually assaulted in their lifetimes." Through music, Mother Song calls her audience not only to empathize with these victims—to imagine the shape, the color, the texture of their pain—but to *re-imagine* their places in society as people who respect one another. Drawing inspiration from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Maxine suggests that provocative, imaginative experiences with art can be thought of as fostering "friendship between minds" in ways that allow us to reach toward wholeness: "Often, imagination can bring severed parts together, can integrate into the right order, can create wholes" (1995, p. 38). I find this facet of imagination to be particularly present in the music videos on Mother Song's channel that feature a group of Native American women singers; many of the songs with English lyrics sung by this group center around celebrating, protecting, and respecting women. I wonder if perhaps Maxine's words might resonate with Mother Song too and the musical relationships she shares with these women; I imagine their musical communion might also bring about empathy and healing for the women involved in Mother Song's music.

Charlie's principal's reaction to Mother Song's music depicts what Juliet Hess and Himani Bannerji see as preference for surface-level engagements with culture and a seemingly fearful attitude toward any kind of real dialogue. Hess (2015) suggests that of the ways which schools often engage in multicultural education, music is perceived as an aspect of culture that is "non-threatening," especially when students' engagements with such focuses on traditional music and cultural traditions of the past (p. 338). Yet when discussions move deeper, as Mother

Song's music centered around domestic abuse does, "they produce a violent reaction, indicating a deep resentment towards funding "others'" arts and cultures" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 79).

As I continue to mull over my conversations with Charlie in writing this chapter, I begin to see a pattern of censorship—a response that seems to characterize his administration's reactions to the ways Charlie tries to embrace more wholly his students' multiple identities in music class. When I observed his classes, Charlie's 6th and 7th grade general music students were in the middle of a ukulele unit; most of Charlie's teaching examples involved popular music or well-known tunes, and on a particular day, the theme song from Pixar's animated short film, *Lava*. Charlie began the lesson by showing his students a Youtube tutorial for the song: "Youtube is a great resource," Charlie told his students, explaining that there were many videos like this one that students could find to learn many of their favorite songs at home. "I try to teach you the music you care about, but I can't teach you some songs you like because they're not school-appropriate," Charlie explained. "But what I want to do is help you figure out how you can learn those songs when you're at home so that you don't need me there to show you what to do." As an example, he asked the students if they knew "Bad Guy" by Billy Eilish (they did). Charlie typed the song and "ukulele tutorial" into the youtube search bar, then played the students a few seconds of a video that followed a similar style as the woman who taught the song from *Lava*. "What's another song we could look up?" Charlie asked. "Let It Go," a student volunteered. Charlie did another search and pulled up another tutorial video. After watching a few seconds of this video, Charlie said, "Look—you already know how to play all of the chords in this one."

After class, Charlie explained to me that the students were not allowed to access Youtube at school or through their school accounts; additionally, he is not allowed to assign work that

requires students to access Youtube. This restriction was particularly difficult for Charlie at the beginning of his school's transition to online instruction amid the COVID-19 shut-downs in March. "I would love to post on Google Classroom and say, 'Listen to this. Tell me what you think.'" He does this in class, Charlie explains, but adds that "sometimes students don't really want to share, or they don't want to talk . . . But if I keep it anonymous, usually I get really good posts." In addition to fostering deeper discussions about music, Charlie speaks excitedly about the community-forming potential of student discussions in less regulated environments: "I love when music can actually be social and they can discuss things," he muses. "I love it so much." After migrating to online instruction, Charlie shares that his administration has eased up on the Youtube restriction and allowed for its use in teachers' online curricular endeavors; he hopes this concession will carry over into the fall when classes are in person again.

In several of our conversations, Charlie also brought up certain *genres* of music he isn't allowed to include in the Pine Ridge curriculum, namely rap and hip-hop. This expression of his administration's censorship is another point of contention for Charlie; he relays not only his own disdain but also what he perceives as student frustration with the policy: "I think that's something that the kids don't like about music classes because I can't talk to them about what they actually listen to." Although Charlie didn't go into detail about his principal's motives for the censorship—perhaps he has not even been made aware—I imagine they are propagated by some version of "moral panic" (Koza 1999) and a conflation of the hip-hop genre as a whole with the version of corporately funded, "exploitative and increasingly one-dimmesional narratives of Black ghetto life" (Rose, 2008, p. 3). Low (2010) documents the fear around a high school administration's response to (and suppression of) a Black male student's hip hop performance at a schoolwide talent night, arguing that "the reasons teachers and administrators

might shy away from 'rap pedagogies' are the reasons that Hip-Hop is pedagogically valuable" (p. 196). Charlie acknowledges that while some music in the genre might not be appropriate for school—an argument that can be made about any genre of music—there are many aspects of the tradition are worthy of curricular engagement:

> I would love to do a rap curriculum. I love rap music and a lot of my kids do too. And there is a huge history behind rap music that I don't think they know about—and I didn't know about either until I started digging into it. And I can't teach it to them. I've gotten shot down twice. This is what the kids interact with. This is what the students are listening to. This is the music in their lives, and they should be taught about it, not—no offence to Beethoven, but he's dead.

As I listen to the interview recordings again, I can hear both Charlie and myself laughing at the turn in his impassioned soliloquy to "Beethoven-as-dead" to justify his argument. But Charlie is also asking a salient question here: What is the value of a curriculum based on music that exists largely outside the experiences and interests of his students? On several other occasions throughout our conversations, Charlie uses "Beethoven" as a symbol for ideas associated with the Western classical music tradition. At the beginning of the COVID-19 transition to online learning, Charlie told me, "I had to do something that I don't like" when I asked him what his curriculum had begun to look like. "I had to [give students] a composer packet" when his administration wanted to see a connection between Charlie's choirs and the band teacher's music theory assignments. Charlie seemed to shrug the requirement off mid-sentence: "So they're learning about Hildegarde—I made sure it was all women. I didn't want to teach them about Beethoven anymore, so it's Hildegarde and Fanny Mendelssohn," ending with a chuckle that hinted at defiance. I think Charlie's use of "Beethoven" here has less to do with the composer, himself, and more to do with things like "maleness," "Whiteness," perhaps even "straight-ness," and the privilege and power that accompany each of these traits in the Western classical music tradition. I think Charlie is also calling, as Greene does, for a concept of "curriculum" that views

students as co-constructors. In the context of a variety of censoring forces that deem certain musical platforms, subjects, and genres "inappropriate" and "unacceptable," Charlie is yearning for deeper, more real, more just musical connections with his students.

In spite of these restrictions, Charlie continues to reach toward responsiveness in his teaching: at times working around these censorship policies, while at others simply disregarding them. After learning of his principal's hesitation toward Mother Song's music, Charlie agreed to the terms that Mother Song would teach only traditional Native American songs rather than her own compositions (some of which addressed domestic abuse). Yet when Mother Song attended the middle school chorus rehearsal—when Charlie saw how much her presence meant to his Native American students—he did not prohibit her from singing an original work when the students requested it. As I reflect on Charlie's own memories of this moment—students humming and mouthing the words along with Mother Song's song—I have no doubt that Charlie made the right decision in allowing the performance. Similarly, the general music lessons I observed in which Charlie taught his students how to find ukulele tutorials on Youtube were explicitly aimed at helping students pursue their own musical interests outside of school. Although his students were not allowed to practice accessing these tutorials in the context of their curricular work, Charlie's instructions made it clear that he hoped they would do this on their own time—for their own purposes.

I admire the strength and clarity of Charlie's convictions, especially for such a young teacher. His resistance to these forms of administrative censorship remind me of William Ayers (2019) who acknowledges that while teachers often "may not have as much control as we'd like concerning the contexts within which we work, we surely have more control than we sometimes recognize or exercise regarding our core values" as we choose "how we might live out those

values in the dailiness of classroom life" (p. 9). In a variety of ways, I think Charlie's core values of equity and inclusion toward his Native American students in class fuel his resistance to this censorship from his administration. In our final conversation, Charlie reflects: "I feel like I say a lot of bad things about the administration at Pine Ridge;" he pauses to acknowledge the privacy of his identity in the published version of my research, which I vigorously affirm, before continuing:

> I think that the administration is [one] of the biggest problems at our school. They try to stop things from happening [that] they deem 'bad' when they're trying to protect us. But those are things that probably would help these students even more, like allowing music to be shared that is actually going to help them and talk about struggles in life—the idea that some of these situations that are happening are real and you're not the only person in the world experiencing them.

As I think back to Charlie's initial comment about how Pine Ridge is accustomed to having researchers on campus, I wonder if these overly-protective policies might largely be a symptom of fear: fear of being examined under a microscope, of being caught on camera at an unflattering angle, of appearing on screen without a filter to smooth its blemishes. I wondered also if the surface-level, tokenized celebrations of culture—ceremonies, dances, speeches, cuisine—that Charlie alluded to at the beginning of our conversations are part of the administration's effort to "save face"—to show these unnamed "researchers" that they are doing their best to address their students' backgrounds by emphasizing these "non-threatening" performances of culture (Hess, 2015; Bannerji, 2000). And yet I am reminded of Davis's (1996) naming of multiculturalism as "akin to spectacle," and King's poignant criticism of these kinds of surface-level displays: "Somewhere along the way, we ceased being people and somehow we became performers of an Aboriginal minstrel show for White America" (2005, p. 68).

As I continue to question my role as a researcher, related through Charlie to the context of Pine Ridge Central School and the Indigenous students who inhabit it, I am haunted by King's

words in this passage. In each of the teaching contexts of my dissertation research, I am striving to document the complexity and ambiguity of becoming a teacher (Hansen, 1995, p. 17), and yet the difficulty of this task feels particularly daunting in this chapter as I consider my identity as a White researcher who is writing about a White teacher who teaches a majority Indigenous student population. I acknowledge that every aspect of cultural representation I have put into writing throughout this chapter is filtered through my own perception as a White researcher, all of which have been guided primarily by the perceptions of Charlie, a White teacher. Although I have sought to become more informed of my blindnesses as a White researcher from the writings of Indigenous writers such as King (2005) and authors of decolonizing scholarship (Hess, 2015; Kallio, 2020; Styres, 2019), I confess I am terrified by the prospect of unknowingly taking part in the tokenistic cultural portrayals throughout this chapter. Still, what I am coming to realize—what I hope I have begun to make evident—is that this chapter is about the process of working through Whiteness: the Whiteness of a teacher (Charlie) striving toward equity and responsivity in his teaching, the Whiteness of a school administration (Charlie's principal) that in many ways seems to be working against these ends, and the Whiteness of a teacher-researcher (myself) striving to portray and theorize about equitable, decolonizing teaching practices. I am frightfully aware that this work of a White researcher and White music teacher might be perceived re-centering Whiteness or as fostering "White solidarity;" yet at the same time, I understand abstaining from teaching and research related to non-White contexts and students only serves to reinforce my Whiteness (Bradley, 2007; DiAngelo, 2018; Ellsworth, 1997; Kallio, 2020; Kruse, 2020; Whetung & Wakefield, 2019). It is in this treacherous, muddled territory that I continue to search for and reach toward equity in this document.

* * *

Charlie told me about one final episode of censorship from his administration that took place in the midway through the data collection: it happened a few days after I visited Charlie's classes, in the middle of what he refers to as "Hell Week"—the week leading up to the school musical he was directing. "Today was a busy day for Charlie with the musical happening on Friday," I wrote in my researcher journal. Our interview conversation that day was squeezed into a 20-minute break between two of Charlie's classes, during which he also managed to mix up and drink a protein shake for his lunch. When Charlie and I spoke next, it was from our respective homes across webcams and LCD screens. Pine Ridge, along with all New York public schools, had closed for the foreseeable future due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While Charlie did eventually resume teaching a few weeks later, our conversation occurred in a kind of purgatorial space—a hiatus from both teaching and vacation for him.

After trading pleasantries and stories of our "new normals," Charlie and I began to pick up a new strand of conversation: "Oh, also, I didn't know if you knew but—well, you knew that I was doing my school musical," Charlie began. "Well, it got cancelled. So that was fun." I had expected to hear this, given the timeline and scope of the shutdowns, but what Charlie told me next, however, I hadn't anticipated: "We had our dress rehearsal," Charlie began—the rehearsal for which he had to miss the PLC at his principal's irritation. "And I was told *not to tell the students*" about the administration's plan to cancel school and the musical. "I found out at 7 o'clock, right when we're starting our run-through for the final dress rehearsal. And [the administrators were] like, 'Don't tell the students.' And I did anyway because I couldn't lie to them." While I strove throughout each of these interviews to be more reserved in my responses

by way of prioritizing follow-up questions that draw participants into further thinking and speaking, I couldn't help reacting when Charlie described the incident to me: "Wow," I said. "That's awful." "Yeah," he continued, "I wasn't going to be like 'Can't wait for your show tomorrow!'" knowing full well it would not be taking place. "I don't think that was a very ethical request from them," I offered. "No, it's not," Charlie continued:

> I was really upset about it too because I put so many hours into the show and the students did too. And it was their show, and they were so proud of what they were doing, and it was wonderful. And then to get the call while we're doing our dress rehearsal saying, "By the way, you can't go on tomorrow because of the coronavirus"—So I had to. And I'm not good at suppressing anything, so they could tell I was upset. So I couldn't lie to them.

Charlie is unapologetic for acting on his convictions in this situation in spite of his administration's attempt to withhold an inevitable outcome from students; I doubt he even considered the possibility of pretending to go along with the lie. In recounting this event, Charlie seems both upset, as he acknowledges, but also unafraid of the potential repercussions: "Maybe I'll just get fired," he scoffs. "I know they weren't happy I told [the students]." At this point in our conversation, Charlie informed me that his administration had not taken any disciplinary actions in response to his disobedience; regardless, he has maintained an unflappable resolution: "I can fight it. If I get a letter in my file—I don't know what it's called but—I'll write a letter in response to that letter that's in my file. I'll definitely do that. That's worth it."

Epilogue: Teaching Sustainability

Those are the moments I love—the best moments. But there's a lot in between that I don't love.

Like most young teachers, Charlie worries about the mental, emotional, and physical sustainability required in continuing to teach for years to come. Recalling my first meeting with Charlie in early February, I remember the uncertainty he had expressed about teaching as a

continued career path; in our final interview conversation in May, I returned to his earlier comment. At this point in our interview conversations, Charlie had been teaching online for nearly two months and was a few days away from an oral defense for his Master's degree—the final stage before obtaining his diploma. After observing his classes and speaking with him for the past four months, I have come to know Charlie as a deeply thoughtful and relational young educator. I have observed firsthand some of the ways he strives to engage his students in relevant musical experiences through inviting into the curriculum music of cultural and personal significance for students; I have witnessed aspects of his struggle to respond to all of his students' needs—to embrace his students' whole identities to the extent that is possible in his classroom. I have listened to Charlie express his concern for individual students and their lives outside of his classroom; I have come to admire the strength of his convictions as an educator, which always seems to center around his desire to keep students' health and wellbeing at the forefront of decision-making. I was hesitant to follow up on this question of sustainability with Charlie in large part because I think he is the kind of educator our profession needs more than ever; the thought of seeing someone like Charlie exit teaching made my heart sink.

And yet, the concerns Charlie expressed to me are compelling and relatable. His first teaching job was at a K-12 school in which he taught general music for all grades as well as middle and high school choir—which he describes as "a really, *really* hard job" that required him to make a mental switch between age groups continually throughout the day—"I was spread so thin." While Charlie's load at Pine Ridge involves more manageable age groupings—middle school general music and chorus, high school voice lessons and chorus—Charlie still struggles with the amount of scheduled teaching time the school demands of him: "They work me until I

basically can't hold my bladder anymore." In reflecting on his first three years of teaching, Charlie said:

> I've definitely had two really undesirable positions since starting. And I know that they say you have to pay your dues as a teacher, and then you get those positions that those [experienced] teachers have. But I'm ready to not have a huge job and just have a more centralized area of teaching instead of doing general music, middle school chorus, high school chorus, high school voice lessons. It's so much in a day, and I feel like I'm trying to do so many things that I can't really thrive at one of them.

At Pine Ridge, Charlie often teaches four or five 50-minute classes in a row without breaks—I remember the protein shake he hurriedly consumed between classes during one of our interviews. "I get to the last two classes of the day and I'm drained," Charlie lamented. "And it's not fair to the students. I'm doing my best to fight through it—I mean, you saw that one 7th grade class—I have to constantly keep moving or else it's going to fall to chaos." The most disheartening part of Charlie's reflection, for me, is once again his principal's response: "I brought these concerns up to [her] and I was told there was nothing they could do about it." "Couldn't or *wouldn't?"* I thought, remembering Charlie's earlier statement about being the fifth music teacher at Pine Ridge in less than ten years. David Hansen (1995) acknowledges that teachers often endure unacceptable working conditions on account of their convictions around teaching in a particular contexts or of certain subject matter (like art and music). The view of teachers as inhabiting sacrificial roles and embodying personalities of generosity often leads to the exploitation of a teacher's good will, as seems to be the case in Charlie's position (Hansen 1995, p. 181).

Perhaps the most difficult days in Charlie's teaching schedule are the ones that end with middle school chorus: a group of 80 students, 6-8th grade, crammed into a classroom that was designed to fit half this number comfortably. The choir room where he teaches has five levels of steep, built-in amphitheater risers. Charlie's desk, electric piano, podium, and projector fit in the

lowest and most central area of the room, while the rest of his students are elevated to varying degrees in front and around him; in observing this rehearsal from the lowest level, I could not even see the students in the back row without standing up and moving around. The rehearsal I viewed was chaotic—students were talking continually and there was barely enough room for them to sit, let alone stand or move around. At the beginning of the rehearsal, Charlie gathered some of his students' attention wordlessly by pounding a few warm-up accompaniments into the piano—"I love the mountains, I love the rolling hills, etc."—in response to which most of the students began to sing. Then Charlie stopped playing abruptly as the end-of-the-day announcements screamed through his PA speaker—the students' instinctively returned to chatting. Once the announcements had been delivered, Charlie continued to lead with his piano and the students sang, "One bottle of pop, two bottle of pop … Don't chuck your muck in my trashcan …" By this point, the students were singing strongly, perhaps in part due to Charlie's directions, perhaps also in competition with the overpowering piano. "Take out the new piece."

Conversation erupted once again with the shuffle of papers, and all of these sounds seemed to be aurally magnified by the classroom's constrained size and design. Charlie solicited his students' attention by speaking, then resorted to clapping rhythmic patterns, which only some of the students echoed. Charlie spoke again, only louder this time with a booming voice that resulted in a temporary hush. He announced that Mother Song would be returning later this week to work with the choir and he wanted to review the words of her song. "How many of you are Native American?" He asked. I looked up at a wall of raised hands that made up a large majority of the class. He asked students to look at their lyrics sheet, identified specific words and phrases, and asked various students to share about their meaning and significance. The classroom was not quiet, by any means, but I could hear the words spoken by student volunteers well enough.

Charlie affirmed the information shared by students, adding at several points, “I didn’t know that—thank you for sharing.” Next, Charlie told the students he had a recording of Mother Song singing the song to play for them. As soon as Charlie walked to his computer, the talking increased in volume; he seemed to be encountering some technical issues and after a minute or two of trying to play it, called out— “Never mind, we’ll listen to it next time. Take out ‘How Can I Keep from Singing.”

Charlie walked wordlessly to the piano again and began playing the song’s introduction; when the students missed their entrances, he began again and this time sang with the students while he played. After singing through most of the song, Charlie stopped and asked, “What do we do to make music sound interesting? A student raised his hand but it was much too loud to hear what he had to say. “I can’t hear you,” Charlie said, almost yelling at this point. “Everyone, you are being rude. It’s not fair to the people who are talking.” The group became quieter and Charlie reiterated: “What do we do to make music interesting?” One student volunteered: “Dynamics” (Charlie: “Good.”). Another student: “We could change the lyrics” (“Good.”). Another: “We could make it hiphop.” (“Good.”). Charlie affirmed each of these suggestions, although the class did not try any of them out before the bell rang. “Sit down,” Charlie said. “You owe me a minute.” The students sat down with huffs and eye rolls. The phone rang and a student bounded across the room to receive it. “No,” Charlie said. “I’m not answering it.” One student in the back of the room—whom I did not see sit down once throughout the class period—continued to pace along the back row, tripping over backpacks and elbowing classmates as he moved. After a minute, Charlie dismissed the students; once they had shuffled out the doorway, spilling into a crowded hallway, Charlie turned to me: “So that’s middle school choir.”

I felt my own version of Charlie's struggle in this moment—rehearsals with 80 beginning band students at 8am every week, dress rehearsals with 120 K-3rd graders in the school auditorium. Charlie's description of the experience as "emotionally and physically draining" resonated deeply. During a final interview conversation several months later, Charlie reflected on his doubts about teaching: "Honestly, I think it is the job that I have and where I'm doing it. I love [teaching] when I'm doing it, but when it's the fourth or fifth period in a row, I'm drained." I think back to the 6th and 7th grade music classes of Charlie's that I had observed: the class sizes of 8-12 students, Charlie's easygoing rapport with the students, the exploration of music students chose on the ukulele—these classes felt worlds apart from middle school choir. The general music classes seemed conducive to Charlie's relationship-building personality and they allowed for more relevant, open-ended exploration of students' musical interests. I wondered if these classes were also closer to what Charlie had in mind when he clarified to me, "I still love teaching, and I love music education, and I love working with kids, and just letting them explore and become creative. I think that's wonderful." He paused, mid-thought before continuing—I thought perhaps he was picturing middle school chorus at the end of a long day of teaching as he said, "But I don't know if I can do it forever the way that I'm doing it."

I know if I had Charlie's job, I would feel similarly exhausted; I would undoubtedly be questioning my career choice—and I *have* questioned my career choice in the past, particularly in moments that follow rehearsals like the one I observed of middle school chorus. I agree with Charlie that the difficulty he is facing seems largely a facet of several stress-inducing factors in his environment: a schedule that barely allows for bathroom breaks, the impossibility of teaching 80 middle schoolers without embodying the personality of a drill sergeant, an administration that seeks to censor curricular musical endeavors, and the cultural divides Charlie must navigate

alongside his students every day. Returning to Charlie's statement, "But I still love teaching," I wonder what continues to sustain his efforts in spite of these struggles? Were there moments in his days of affirmation? Did Charlie have reasons apart from financial necessity to keep striving? After our lengthy conversation around some of the factors that make it difficult for Charlie to see himself continuing to teach long-term at Pine Ridge, I was surprised at how quickly he responded to my question about when and where these moments of clarity emerge. In his initial example, Charlie recalled a middle school general music student from earlier in the year. The student had expressed a particular interest in playing ukulele and asked Charlie if he could take one of the instruments home. "I was reluctant because they're very expensive and I only have 20 for all of my students," Charlie explained, "[But] I said yes. I let him borrow it for one night." To Charlie's surprise, the student returned the ukulele to him the next day, eager to show Charlie what he had practiced at home:

> He came back and he performed Lava—it's a short video from Pixar, a ukulele song—he performed it for me the next day with the right chords … And I didn't help him at all—I mean he knew the chords [from class], but he learned the song on his own. He took what I taught him in class like finding resources online and videos. He did all of that on his own. And that was the moment I was like, "This is what I want to do—because this kid is taking an interest outside of what I'm doing [in class]."

Charlie expresses his excitement at this point in our conversation at the thought of a student taking what they learned in music and using it outside of class. I think it is telling of Charlie's values as a music educator that he chose this moment as one that marks his continued interest in teaching: while another music teacher might point toward a successful performance, an effective lesson activity, or perhaps an engaging in-class discussion, Charlie is energized by this particular student's independence—the work the student did *outside* of class, *without* Charlie's direct instruction. When I mentioned my fascination with his response to Charlie, he elaborated: "I want to give them tools to be successful in music outside of my classroom because I want them

to do something with music. And I'm not always going to be there to scream, 'This is quarter note.' I can't do that." Charlie acknowledges that while his students exhibit different degrees of motivation to be musical outside of school, the idea of preparing all students to do so once they leave his classroom continues to drive his curricular efforts. Charlie describes some of his favorite moments with students as "the ones when they don't need me." In a concluding reflection on both the sources of stress in his teacher life and moments like the one he described above, Charlie offered, "So those are the moments that I love. Those are the best moments. But there's a lot of moments in between that I don't love."

As our final interview comes to a close, I am less worried about losing Charlie as a teacher from the music education profession. As is often a part of becoming an educator, teachers must find schools that fit their needs, values, and personalities—schools for which the teacher is also a good fit. The unfortunate part of this story, in my view, is that I think Charlie is a great fit for Pine Ridge: he continually strives to understand his students' identities and cultures deeply, and he has repeatedly endeavored to open up the music curriculum as an invitation for such. And yet, aside from the frustrations he has experienced with a lack of administrative support at Pine Ridge, Charlie also has personal reasons to look for teaching positions elsewhere: he and his fiancé are hoping to move closer to their parents and start the adoption process for having a family of their own; when we spoke last, both men had collectively begun to apply for jobs and schools nearer to the city where each of their parents each live. I hope that Charlie's next teaching position will be a sustainable fit: one that respects and supports Charlie's striving toward equity, inclusion, and responsivity in his teaching—a school that allows (rather than standing in the way of) Charlie to continue reaching toward ways to more wholly embrace the multiple identities of students in the music classroom.

Chapter VI

BECOMING GREG

The Call to Teach

"I can't necessarily tell you why . . . [teaching] just seemed like something I wanted to explore."

Although Greg's story is not one of someone who knew he wanted to be a teacher from a young age, an early inkling was there. . .a wisp or a flicker of something to come. Today, Greg describes his attitude toward teaching as an undergraduate as something he was open to, but "never something I wanted to do right out of school." Yet at several points in his pre-teaching career as both the owner of an instrument repair shop and a professional, "cruise ship percussionist," Greg found himself wondering about—perhaps reaching for—something he couldn't quite articulate.

A pivotal development took form during Greg's daily trips as a cruise ship performer on voyages that traveled to and from Marco Island, Florida and Key West. Amid his official duties —singing and playing tropical tunes on his steel drum for seven hours a day as a backdrop for the sunbaked, swimsuit-clad tourists holding frozen daiquiris—Greg began to yearn for something deeper. While acknowledging his gratitude for a job that "paid the bills" and allowed him to support his wife and young son, Greg reflects, "I really wasn't awfully proud of the work I was doing … at the time it felt rather shallow."

As the monotony of these tropical performances blew by with the gentle, Florida breeze, Greg's restlessness eventually led to a new way of engaging with his cruise ship audiences: "I started telling stories as part of the performance." Specifically, Greg began by pointing out

constellations to travelers to accompany their moonlit voyage back to the mainland, which became, in his view, "the most engaging part of the show by a longshot." In contrast to the passivity through which the steel drum music was typically received, Greg recalls a noticeable shift in the tourists who would often stop and follow along with the shapes and patterns he pointed out in the sky.

> It really resonated … that I was affecting their trip in a way that was a little bit deeper and a little bit different than when I was just singing "Margaritaville." I can't necessarily tell you why it felt that way, but it definitely seemed like something I wanted to explore.

Intrigued by this newfound performer/audience engagement, Greg continued to infuse his cruise ship performances with topics he hoped would be of interest to travelers: pieces of Key West history, star patterns, and some of the mythological stories behind constellations and their formations. Greg connects the musical preferences of his 20s to these cruise ship performance shifts of his musical performing: "The music I was really drawn to at that time had a lot to do with storytelling. . .folk music and the old-time ballads;" he now looks back on this time of musical storytelling as serving to reconcile the music he preferred with the music he was paid to perform. I think Greg was also becoming an educator.

As I reflect on Greg's stories of an early performing career, I am struck by his professional desire to be "more than a performer." For conservatory-trained musicians like Greg, being able to make sustainable living as a performer is often seen as enough, while teaching is viewed as supplementary or temporary to be discarded upon landing a full-time performance gig. This same set of values often propels the idea that "those who can't 'do' 'teach,'" battering those along the way who, like Greg, seem to be reaching elsewhere. Yet it is amid his career as a full time, "professional musician," that the seeds of an identity as "teacher" begin to grow. Perhaps

Greg was becoming conscious of a desire to connect with people more deeply through music in ways that move beyond the transactional nature of his cruise ship performances.

Educational philosopher David Hansen explores the concept of teaching as a "vocation" in a way that has continued to resonate with my experience of Greg's becoming a music educator. Hansen contrasts the concept of "vocation" with others such as "job," "occupation," "work," "career," and "profession:" teaching viewed as a vocation, Hansen suggest, "is a form of public service that yields enduring personal fulfillment to those who provide it" (Hansen, 1995, p. xiii). Teaching as a vocation is a "calling," Hansen offers, an "inner urge to contribute to the world" (1995, p. 5). And while I think Hansen's concept of teaching as a vocation applies to the ways Charlie and Marc also view their teaching, Greg's stories of consciously reaching toward social embeddedness of his musicianship seem most explicitly connected to such. The stories Greg told me of the experiences that eventually led him to teaching—a music business degree, opening an instrument repair shop, working as a full-time performer—each of these situations revealed to Greg bits of his desire to teach, or perhaps, the call he felt toward a more interconnected form of musical engagement. I think we need more musicians like Greg: performers who strive to connect with their audiences and social communities; storytellers who want to awaken their listeners to the world around them; music teachers who, as I think Greg's stories suggest, care deeply about the embedded nature of their work within a community.

And yet, I think Greg's stories of searching for meaningful work also illustrate Hansen's respect for the various journeys that lead may lead a person to teaching: "Nobody can wake up in the morning and declare, 'I think I'll make teaching my vocation today,'" (1995, p. 157). Rather, Hansen suggests, "vocation comes to life as one comes to grips with the work, as one meets its challenges and realizes the personal fulfillment that comes from doing so" (p. 157). As I

continued to speak with Greg and observe his vocational work as a music teacher throughout this study, I witnessed stories of the challenges Greg continues to face as well as what he calls "moments of connection" with students, parents, and community members through music, stories of which I will tell throughout this chapter. Hansen offers that "teaching as a vocation goes hand in hand with questions, doubts, and uncertainties," stories of which I will share later in this document (p. 15). Yet what I think other witnesses of Greg's stories (and my stories of *his* stories) will recognize—particularly those stories related to the various challenges and adversities Greg has faced over the years as a teacher—is that these moments of connection are what continue to sustain his striving and his becoming as a teacher.

Busking in the Classroom

"I wanted to be 'that guy' that didn't know he was at work because I was having so much fun."

From the beginning of our conversations, it was clear to me that Greg sees his work as being highly contextualized within his community. Greg talks about "the peak" of his music program's history in which students were involved in over 40 community events throughout the year: coffee shop ensembles, library performances, pep bands that played for sports games, a Christmas tree lighting, community dinners, athletic awards, parades, etc. "What I loved about it," Greg remarks, "was that we had kids who were using music as a tool to engage with their community."

As a college student, Greg played his steel drum on the street corners of his home town—"my summer job"—a practice that eventually led the community to adopt a "busking festival" years later. In an early interview, Greg mentioned a former group of students who formed a fiddle trio to serenade students as they got off the buses in the mornings. It seems to me as

though Greg took the concept of "busking" and brought it to his school: "Just the fact that music could be 'in the air,'" Greg elaborates. "I really wanted to make that an integral part of what our community did, what our school did."

Philosophically, Greg holds a broad view of the kinds of musical contexts he sees as valuable for students, pointing to both concert band performances—"let's do this formal thing . . . let's understand what that's all about"—and the act of "playing in a corner" at an awards night. He explains that often when students are able to perform *without* being the center of attention, it allows them to build a sense of confidence and a willingness to engage, musically, with their communities in more accessible ways:

> To me, music making is the senior citizens over here playing in the library, and it's me playing on a boat somewhere or on a street corner—and that's not super highly formalized stuff. Half the time, it is background music. Sometimes, you're the star, sometimes you're just the atmosphere. And for [students] to be able to engage on those levels . . . I felt it was really important that we could do that here.

Here Greg seems to be describing a kind of "effervescence" in the variety of musical engagements he values—a musical form that flows beyond the walls of the concert hall, an engagement with sound that is enacted beyond the raised platform of a performance stage. "So many different settings, so many different kinds of action, so many different ways of organizing sounds into meanings," Christopher Small muses, "all of them given the name *music*" (1998, p. 1). I think the broad view Greg holds on the kinds of musical experiences that are valuable emphasize the participatory social relations and embeddedness—the "social bonding, nurturing, and cooperation"—over aspects of performative competition and hierarchy (Turino, 2008, p. 32).

One thread that has continued to weave itself back and forth throughout Greg's musical engagements with his community in unexpected ways is the steel drum. Shortly after beginning his first teaching job, Greg formed a small steel drum ensemble that volunteered its

performances at a variety of community events. As this music gained interest throughout his community, Greg started a beginning steel drum group for people who wanted to learn the instrument. These ensembles also earned favor with a community member who donated the funds for four more steel drums, which led toward further expansion—both in membership and instrumentation—until they included four groups with over 50 participants whose ages ranged from six to 66! At their height, the steel drummers performed collectively at 30 to 40 community events throughout the year. Greg laughs, remembering the supportive pleas he received from parents to moderate the group's performance frequency: "We have no weekends left!"

Greg refers to this first position in public education—teaching electronic music classes as a middle school general music instructor—as "my 8-3 job." While Greg speaks fondly of this position, it seemed to lack opportunities for the kinds of community music involvement that initially drew him to the music education profession. "I wanted to be 'that guy' that didn't know when he was at work because I was having so much fun," Greg explains. "And when I left school, I was going to do more of this same thing—to take music and our school musicians out into the community and really have that sort of seamless lifestyle." Here, again, Greg's becoming seems to be intimately connected to the concept of teaching as a vocation. "A sense of vocation finds its expression at the crossroads of public obligation and personal fulfillment," Hansen suggests, "It takes shape through involvement in work that has social meaning and value" (Hansen, 1995). Greg's desire to be professionally involved in his community extended beyond the boundaries of his "8-3 job," such that his work as a music teacher began to spill over into his engagements outside of school.

Imagine a rural town with just over 3,000 residents and four steel drum ensembles with members of all ages: the participatory reach of these steel drum groups is remarkable. What was

it about this particular musical setting that seemed to resonate so strongly with Greg's community over the course of nearly ten years? When I asked Greg about it, he shared several thoughts: "First of all, [steel drum music] has such a powerful sense of place," he explained, acknowledging the appeal of its tropical associations—"sandy beaches," "palm trees," and warm, sunny weather—that are extra-appealing, given the cold and often harsh weather conditions present in upstate New York. Plus, Greg adds, it caters toward a certain "mythological sense" or notion of "paradise" sought after. And as someone who has spent—or rather "survived"—several winters in this region, bundled up in flannel, down coats, and layers of sweaters, I can personally attest to feeling this desire for warmth and sunshine.

Another aspect of the steel drum music setting that Greg thinks might account for its reception is its "intergenerational" appeal. He explains that people of older and younger generations often hold very different musical preferences: while older people might hold negative associations toward rock music and "aggressive guitar" playing, for example, younger people might also view the country and bluegrass music genres favored by older generations as "corny." Conversely, Greg describes the steel drum repertoire as "fun," "upbeat," and as having an infectious kind of "energy," "vibe," and "life" to it apart from the generational associations that might dissuade people from participating. Greg recalls some of the steel drum group's performances at parades: "We'll have kids jumping up and down on the floats," and that "grandparents could be listening to it with their grandkids, parents and [everyone] in between" such that "everybody can find something to appreciate."

Lastly, Greg points to an aspect of the ensemble that I find particularly compelling (and that I will return to later in the chapter): "the barrier to entry"—Greg's phrase—is relatively low in this musical setting compared to others. In conjunction with appealing repertoire, Greg

attributes part of the steel drum ensemble's popularity to its accessibility for beginners: "We can play very, very simple tunes, and people still respond super well to [them]." He illustrates further, "We can go down the street and play Baby Shark for an hour and a half in the parade and just get wild, *wild* crowd reception," especially when the kids are able to be physically engaged—dancing and jumping—with the music as they play. "It's really unusual for kids to receive that kind of accolade and to get that kind of a reception" for a musical performance, Greg acknowledges, especially when the music is so simple. The extent to which the steel drum ensemble has been a part of Greg's own musical life and most prominently, his teaching career, seems to have been a surprise for Greg. It also proved to be an interesting, alternative musical space for exploring some of Greg's deepest questions and tensions around teaching *concert band*, which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter.

* * *

After nine years of steel drum community ensembles and teaching music in an "8-3" capacity, Greg was hired to teach middle and high school band at his current school—his own alma mater. At the beginning of his tenure, Greg explains that his administration hoped he might rebuild the school marching band to its former stature: "During the era that I was here [as a student], there was a really powerful marching band presence," he explains. "[It] was part of the identity of this community: we were that little tiny school that would go somewhere with three bus loads of kids and an 80-piece marching band." Knowing how important the marching band had been to Greg's own musical growth and to his community at large, Greg hoped to rekindle the tradition in his new role as band director.

Yet as he began the process of rebuilding, Greg struggled to recruit the personnel required by the repertoire, eventually realizing the marching band no longer seemed to appeal to his school community. Although he initially wondered if this was a "small school problem," a turning point in Greg's thinking occurred when he and his students joined with a neighboring high school for a summer parade: although this school was known for the size of its music program, on this particular day, the parade was almost cancelled. "In the entire school of however-many-thousands-of-kids, there were zero trumpet players who were willing to come to this," Greg explains, describing his surprise that this much larger district similarly struggled with recruitment. Now, Greg acknowledges, an 80-person band of his school-aged years is "unheard of in the schools around here."

While Greg seems to lament this cultural shift in some ways, I think his yearning for a way to connect with his community supercedes this feeling and prompts him to reach for alternatives. Hansen (1995) suggests that teaching with a vocational mindset involves qualities like patience, compromise, reflection, and most of all, "a willingness to change" (p. 21). What I hope to communicate through the teaching examples present in this section is the extent to which I believe Greg continually strives toward openness and receptivity toward his community's needs. After realizing that the marching band had not taken hold, Greg shifted the group's identity to one that resembled a New Orleans-style Mardi Gras band, which he thought might resonate similarly to the steel drum ensemble's ethos. The challenge with the Mardi Gras music, Greg found, is that "the barrier to entry"—that phrase again—still poses a significant challenge: "Bad tone production on a trumpet is just bad tone production." Greg continues to search for a musical venue that will speak to the needs and interests of his particular community.

Seeing School "Large"

"If you like that path, we'll go with it."

My final conversation with Greg during the data collection process was less of an interview and more of a book club discussion; when Greg expressed curiosity about Maxine Greene and her relation to my research, I suggested that we read and discuss some of her work together. Greg was enthusiastic about this idea so I sent him the introduction and first two chapters of *Releasing the Imagination*, by way of introducing him to a few main topics: art as social imagination and education as contextually embedded. When we met over Zoom for this final conversation, I asked Greg if there were any passages he had underlined—ideas that stood out to him as he read. Greg responded immediately by pointing to the distinction Greene draws in Chapter I between seeing school "small" and "big." Because I knew Greg also had extensive leadership training and a master's degree in administration, I had a hunch this distinction might resonate. My own perceptions of Greg's becoming—through observing his teaching and witnessing his vocational thought processes in conversation—were of a teacher who is strongly committed to seeing school large.

To see school large, Greene asserts, is to "refuse the artificial separations of the school from the surrounding environment, to refuse the decontextualizations that falsify so much"—this is the passage Greg named first in our discussion (1995, p. 11). Greg's desire to hold more than an "8-3 job" and his efforts toward engaging his community in a socially-embedded form of music—i.e., "busking"—are clear examples of Greg's value of work embedded in the uniqueness of his own community. Conversely, Greene suggests, "to see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view" and to be "concerned with trends and

tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life" (p. 10). Greg explained that while most of his administrative training had focused on seeing school small, he has striven to maintain a focus on the individual students and classes with whom he works as a music teacher. He recounted an experience in one of his leadership classes; a professor had commented on one of his papers, "It sounds like you think 'data' is a dirty word." Greg described the turmoil he felt with this idea, acknowledging the value he sees in having knowledge about whole systems (from the point of view of an administration) while also respecting the individuality of educational contexts. "It's not so much that I think it's a dirty word," Greg remembers saying to his professor, "but I think that too often it's used as a weapon" and that people can manipulate numbers to get to a variety of preconceived conclusions.

During a previous interview conversation, I had asked Greg to tell me a bit about "who his students are" or what he might want an outsider—me, in this case—to know about his students in observing his classes. Looking back, I see this was the wrong question to ask because it left Greg wondering about things like community statistics and demographic measures, unsure how to answer the question—I had inadvertently asked Greg to see his students as "small." In returning to this question of "who his students are" in a later conversation, I clarified to Greg that I hadn't meant to ask him about his students in reductive or overly-generalized ways, that I had intended the question more as an open-ended invitation for Greg to share things he thought were important about his students and school community. In response, Greg pulled up a list of his students' names: "The only way I can think to answer that question is to go through [the list] and say, 'This is what I know about these two' or 'This is what this group is like,' or 'Here's an individual that has this to deal with.'" So I invited Greg to do this, glad we had made our way

toward a version of the question that felt productive toward understanding the "big-ness" of Greg's teaching situation.

Maintaining confidentiality, Greg described several of his students: a high school trumpet player who, amidst the COVID-19 quarantine was recording brass instrument tutorials for younger students; a few students who struggle to remain organized in their classes but always remember to attend their band lessons; a capable drummer who rarely practices outside of school; a student who connects with the electronic music in Greg's modern music class while struggling to distance himself from prior involvement in drug culture; a flute player whose 6th grade progress and engagement seem to have halted in 7th grade due to challenges in her home life. Although Greg assured me that these different aspects he had described of the various individuals in his classes are not unique to his teaching context, what *was* clearly unique, from my perspective, was the degree to which Greg holds multifaceted pictures of his students as complex individuals both in and out of the bandroom.

Structuring Curriculum in Response to Students

Greg's effort to meet the needs of his students in a variety of ways was ever-present in our discussions and in my observations of his classes. In one of our initial email correspondences, Greg suggested a particular day in his schedule that he thought might be interesting for me to observe; his written tone sounded almost apologetic: "The lesson groups are not large, but none of mine are. There are, however, a variety of things going on throughout the day." Yet from my "observer perspective," these smaller group settings were advantageous in how they showcased the acuity of Greg's responsivity to the "largeness" of individual students. In particular, a one-on-one guitar lesson stands out for me: Greg and a high school guitar player—a student who had scheduling conflicts with the high school's "Jazz-Rock Band" but

continued weekly guitar lessons. At the start of the lesson, Greg showed the student a new book geared toward blues-style improvisation and said (I am paraphrasing from my notes): "It seemed like you didn't really like the activities we did much last time so I brought some new book to try out today that will hopefully be more enjoyable." The student nodded his head reservedly as Greg reached for his own electric guitar. The two warmed up simultaneously: "Guitar player life," Greg said, setting up a joke, "We spend half of our time tuning our guitars and the other half playing out of tune, right?" The student smiled slightly and finished tuning. Greg has a gentle, low-key humor style with his students—not in the stereotypically boisterous, "band-director-as-entertainer" style, but in a way that seems aimed at drawing students out, as if saying, "it's ok to have a little bit of fun here too; we don't have to be serious about everything."

Throughout the lesson they worked on patterns, riffs, and melodic lines related to the blues scale: Greg pointed out a line in the book, modeled it for the student, and then asked the student would play while Greg accompanied with a 12-bar blues progression. Then Greg encouraged the student to switch back and forth between two of the riffs: "I think the cool thing about playing blues," Greg explained (again, I'm paraphrasing), "is that you don't have to learn a full page of music like you do in concert band. Instead, you learn a few of these riffs and choose which ones you want to play." Student and teacher went back and forth this way throughout the lesson: playing together with solo and accompaniment, learning and practicing four different riffs, and incorporating them into Greg's framework of "choosing which ones you want to play." Although he remained verbally reserved throughout the lesson, the student seemed to me to be musically engaged through his continued responses to Greg's promptings of the patterns and riffs they explored together. At the end of the lesson, Greg asked the student if the book seemed promising, to which the student nodded. Greg filled in some of the silence with a comment about

how the book seemed to have some "meat" to it, ending with, "If you like that path, we'll go with it."

I observed this kind of responsivity in many of Greg's other lesson groups and in our conversations that followed. In several class periods, students chose the structure of their lesson activities from strips of paper that read, "improvisation," "concert band music," "sight-reading," "method book songs," and even "bad jokes." When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Greg mentioned in passing that he had delivered a steel drum—a personal instrument he did not often lend to students—to the house of one of his middle school students so that she could have a musical outlet throughout the quarantine. On another occasion, he coordinated a socially-distanced front lawn rehearsal for a few trumpet players to rekindle the social aspect of their motivation to play. These are only a few examples of the ways in which Greg continually strives to engage and meet the needs of each of his students through his role as "music teacher."

In the large ensemble setting, Greg strives to honor his students' instrument preferences even when this meant writing steel drum parts for a student in the middle school concert band or accommodating a beginning band of eight percussionists and two trumpets. Greg also prioritized popular music arrangements in his concert band, including recent selections of Wiz Kalifa's "See You Again," and "A Million Dreams" from *The Greatest Showman*–tunes his students seemed to know and enjoy. During my visit, I observed a middle school concert band rehearsal of "Enter Sandman" by Metallica. It was a slightly chaotic, last-period rehearsal—a feeling I know well after struggling through six years of teaching beginning band: the room was packed with wind players, percussionists, high school helpers, backpacks, and equipment, and their 40-minute rehearsal was interrupted at least three times by phone calls from the main office. After spending about 20 minutes on a descending chromatic scale and addressing "concert E natural" fingerings

for each of the instrument groups, Greg acknowledged to his students, "We spent so much time on that second note . . . I don't want you to be so bored. . .but the reason why we spent so much time on that is because once we start playing Metallica, we have to be dialed in like we were just now." In other words, "we need this concert E natural to be able to play Metallica, so bear with me, here." For the remainder of the rehearsal, the band rehearsed "Enter Sandman," which Greg describes afterward to me as "really rough," asking, "How long did we spend today just trying to get an E natural to sound like an E natural? It was way too long." Yet Greg also wonders, "if we can't get it over the space of a slow-moving half note, how are we ever going to put it in the context of that [Metallica] line?" Greg seems to be struggling in this moment with wanting to engage his students in music they enjoy while also recognizing that their technical skill set is not yet ready for it. Greg and I returned to this idea at length in our later conversations as well, which I will detail later in the chapter.

Greg's "Rigor vs. Engagement Conundrum"

"Come back with something you're excited enough about to have made some progress on."

Throughout each of our conversations, Greg returned to a problem that has continued to weigh on his mind, which he refers to as his "rigor vs. engagement" conundrum. I tend to recoil a bit at the word, "rigor," on account of my associations of it as "eduspeak jargon" and a "buzzword;" when I hear about "rigor," it is usually related to situations involving quantitative measures such as AP tests, IB certifications, standardized assessments, bridging "achievement gaps," and preparing for entrance to Ivy League schools. Rigor is a word so overused in the age of neoliberal education reform that it has taken on a nebulous quality, as Draeger, Del Prado Hill, Hunter and Mahler (2013) and Draeger, del Prado Hill and Mahler (2014) show in their

comparison of student and faculty perceptions of the word at a state university in New York. While faculty members in the 2013 study tended to associate rigor with higher order thinking and active engagement in meaningful content, students in the 2014 report more strongly associated rigor with grades, work load (specifically related to amounts of reading and writing), and a perceived difficulty of subject matter. Not only did faculty and student conceptions of rigor vary widely, neither group converged separately on a general operating definition of the word. The faculty members "seemed to believe that they 'know [rigor] when they see it,' but few felt confident in their ability to define it" (Draeger et al., 2013, p. 269).

Other authors comment on the negative associations with the word, rigor, many of which resonate with my own experience of such. Waitoller, Nguyen and Super (2019) investigated the meaning of rigor in the context of a variety of stakeholders at schools that identified as "no-excuse charter schools;" in this setting, the authors found rigor to be strongly associated with standardized measurements of progress, harsh and punitive discipline, militant classroom environments, a lack of learning support for struggling students, and an overwhelming homework load for many students. Wraga (2011) suggests that these negative associations are by definition part of what rigor means, suggesting that widely utilized meanings include concepts like harshness and severity, stiffness and rigidity, exactness and precision. Wraga also suggests that the word "rigor" is a remnant of archaic learning theories of "mental discipline." Ironically, the title of Barbara Blackburn's (2018) book, *Rigor is not a Four-Letter Word*, also speaks to the negativity associated with the word; although the author spends over 150 pages trying to convince their reader that rigor is a positive concept, the title of Blackburn's text assumes readers already thing of rigor negatively, which is exactly Wraga's (2010) point. This tangled mess of meaning brings me back to Greene: "Our discussions of standards and curriculum frameworks

and outcomes still have not touched seriously upon the matter of our purposes as a society: upon what it means to educate *live* persons" (1995, p. 170).

Our conversations centered around the idea of "rigor" prompt flashbacks of my own childhood piano lessons (see Chapter II): method books, flashcards for drilling note names, contest repertoire lists, theory and musicianship exams, recitals, studying recordings, hours of practicing, learning new "masterworks." If asked to articulate an understanding of "rigor" during my piano lesson years, I probably would have answered similarly to the college students in Draeger et al. (2014) by listing the number of hours I practiced each week, the challenging repertoire selections I was painstakingly picking my way through, perhaps even citing the number of times my friends wanted me to come out and play but I told them "I have to practice piano." Although I took pride in my work and perceived in myself a sincere interest in and commitment to my own music education, I think my understanding of rigor would have been fairly shallow—limited mostly to measures of achievement.

All of this is to say that what I learned about Greg's version of rigor surprised me: "I see it as a super highly differentiated [concept]" Greg said, explaining further that "what rigor might look like for [the guitar player] could be totally different from the [7th grade] clarinet players that you saw." As we continued to unpack the concept throughout our conversations, I began to find Greg's understanding refreshing; instead of assuming standardized measures of success, Greg's version of rigor necessitated responsiveness to individuality; instead of expecting students to emerge from the music department with identical skill sets, Greg expected each of his students to pursue their interests and show him their progress. The reason I primarily highlight Greg's discussion of rigor in what follows is not because he places greater importance on such, but because in my view, the extent to which he continually strives toward individual student

engagement is obvious (characterized by some of the examples above). I focus on unpacking the "rigor" aspect of Greg's turmoil because the way he thinks about it is complex and intertwined with how Greg views himself as an educator.

In an effort to understand the way Greg was thinking of these two concepts, I brought up the guitar lesson. From my perspective, both engagement and rigor (according to Greg's concept of such) were present in the lesson: the student seemed to be exhibiting enjoyment of the blue improvisation musical setting (engagement) while also developing technical skill on the instrument through practicing the new riffs and patterns (rigor). While Greg is willing to acknowledge the student's musical engagement in this lesson—what he calls "moments of connection"—he is less willing to see the work they did in that lesson as "rigorous." I continued to prod Greg's use of this word in an effort to understand how he thought of it in his classes.

Among other topics related to the concept, Greg points to what he calls "layers of accountability" as an interconnected topic; in the case of the guitar lesson, Greg suggests that a missing piece in the lesson—an aspect of rigor—is the student's own commitment to his own musical progress. In one of our first conversations, Greg told me that he shadowed another band director in a nearby district whom he described as having a successful, highly respected program. According to this director, he learned to accept that students weren't going to practice outside of school and primarily focused on using lessons and rehearsals as effectively as possible. When I brought this idea up again in relation to the guitar lesson, Greg backpedaled a bit: "I remember saying that, it is true," but "even as I hear you say it, [it] just brings up that kind of internal debate again: should that be something I'm willing to accept?" Greg alludes here to an idea of rigor that necessitates a student's active commitment to progress—a demonstration of musical engagement *outside* of school:

> Essentially, show me some progress. Go home, work on something, and show me what it was; I don't even care if it's what was assigned or not. Just come back with something you're excited enough about to have made some progress on.

Thus, rigor as Greg sees it here is not just the development of a technical skill set, but requires a degree of agency from students. Perhaps a more "Maxine" way of saying this might be, "Show me a piece of your musical 'becoming.'"

Another thread woven into Greg's concept of "rigor" is his own accountability to administration and the school community at large. Greg acknowledges what he feels as a disconnect between the lip service paid by administrators to the importance of engagement—"what I definitely hear [from them] is 'student engagement!' 'Student engagement!' 'Student engagement!'"—and the understated assumption that students in all classes must also be making clear, measurable, *comparable* progress. Greg clarifies that while he views his administrators as "super open-minded and very supportive" of his work as a music teacher, "I know if I was getting these results in a Regents class, we would be having very different conversations."

Greg often feels pulled between what he views as opposing goals: "building a culture of excellence" in his music classes vs. working toward the "moments of connection" that I pointed to in our discussion of the blues guitar lesson.

> If the goal is to have those moments of connection, I think that can be a worthy goal. . .it would settle a lot of the debate if I just knew that "the goal is just to spend half an hour a week making whatever connection you can make and trying to have a musical experience at whatever level." I love that. That's the kind of thing I get pretty excited about.

Here, Greg seems to be reaching more toward the engagement end of the spectrum—an aspect of teaching I think Greg does very well—and away from the idea that measurements of student progress are inherently meaningful. But the tension between engagement and rigor is not as simple as this quote might suggest if taken out of context, because Greg *does* desire for students

to demonstrate a commitment to technical progress on their instruments. In continuing the statement above, Greg said, "On the other hand, I know there's that concert bearing down on us. . .and that's going to be rough if we don't get that together, and boy, it *has* been rough a lot of times." I thought back to the middle school Metallica rehearsal, another example of this tension between programming engaging repertoire for students and the technical reality that sometimes learning to play the E natural in "Enter Sandman" might simply be "boring."

Throughout this conversation, I felt like I was continually trying to drill down to the primary source of what Greg was experiencing—the heart of the tension, the external force being imposed upon his time with students such that he felt he sometimes feels unable to prioritize these "moments of connection." A lack of student ownership or follow-through with their learning seemed to be a piece of the puzzle, and Greg's administration also seemed to be a contributing force, but it seems like there is more to it. I expected the concert piece to come up at some point, since this is an external source of stress I think most teachers can relate to. Greg concludes by reiterating the engagement/rigor tension as he returns to the approach of a concert: "We've had these nice moments, but the end product isn't there at the level that we often think it's expected. So I think that's the tension. There's those two things that we're told are the goals" of which the balance is difficult to maintain. And yet, it still seemed like there was more to the story.

In trying to peel back some of these layers of the external demands placed upon his teaching—standardized administrative expectations, concerts as a "measure of progress"—I invited Greg to imagine what teaching music might be like without these constraints; specifically, how would he think about "rigor" in this context? To my surprise, Greg answered,

"The definition is probably the same: 'Show me some progress.'" However, he continued by peeling back yet another layer:

> What might be different is that I might re-imagine what concerts look like so that instead of a large ensemble, it's many small ensembles or soloists … duets and trios with friends … so I think that's probably the big difference—what role the large ensemble plays—if I'm trying to imagine how I could be more effective in this program.

Once we arrived at the idea of making music outside of the large ensemble, I began to understand how Greg was thinking of his engagement vs. rigor conundrum more deeply, and in a way that made sense of what I already knew of his socially-embedded view of music making. I also think it was interesting that Greg used the word, "re-imagine" here—a very "Maxine" way of putting it.

Greg points out that in the past, "Concert bands and military bands were really engaging and really captured people's imaginations," such that school music programs built around these ensembles "made a ton of sense." He also reflects on the marching band program that was an integral part of the community when Greg was a student, acknowledging that the community has changed. "Whether the concert band model is one that really holds a lot of water in this day and age is a fairly open question." With his own students, Greg acknowledges, "we haven't particularly solved that puzzle when it comes to large ensembles. I think the barrier is perhaps a little bit lower with smaller groups, especially if kids have some ability to choose who they're working with," pointing again to the aspect of friendship and social integration as being essential to the program's success.

I appreciate Greg's acknowledgement of the sociocultural aspect of bands throughout history and his justification of them according to those times/places/people; his acknowledgement of such caused me to pause and reflect: I have never thought about marching band as favorably as I have in talking with Greg because his primary justification for the group is

community participation and social camaraderie. It's like he's saying "we should do this for the people involved….and if that's not what they need, let's do something else." Greg's view in this instance is not about "art for *art's* sake" but more "art for *people's* sakes." I like that.

Greg continued in describing the tension he feels around the large ensemble model as it relates to adult music making after graduation:

> I struggle a little bit with the notion that we're somehow preparing our kids to go out and take part in community bands, in college ensembles and things, because you really don't see it happening. There are some active community bands around here, and some of them are quite good. They tend to consist mostly of college music majors and music teachers and people who were very successful as musicians in high school.

I have seen this trend that Greg describes in much of the research on adult, avocational music making. Many of these studies focus on successful community bands, often emphasizing connections between the engagement of these adult participants and their K-12 instrumental music education backgrounds (Arnwine, 1996; Bowen, 1995; Mantie, 2012). What these studies rarely account for—especially the larger scale, quantitative ones—is the extent to which students who leave high school instrumental programs *do not* join community bands later in life. As Greg points out through his own perception of community band participation in upstate New York, these bands represent a select group of people, a small subset of adults, especially those who have pursued careers related to music.

Rather, Greg suggests that smaller, flexible instrument groups offer more relevant music-making opportunities for his students—the coffee shop groups that Greg described in our first conversation together as having been integral to the program:

> I think that is a model that relates a little better to real-world music-making, especially in small rural communities … At least in my little school, in my little world, the large ensemble doesn't offer the type of camaraderie and a type of connection to real-world music-making that it did at one point.

Again, I see Greg's commitment to the idea that music making is bound to unique social contexts. Even though this particular conversation is somewhat idealistic—I am asking him to imagine a structurally different band program—Greg continues to contextualize the conversation within his own school community. Greg doesn't seem to spend much time asking questions like, "What does an ideal instrumental music program look like?" but rather, "What does an ideal instrumental music program look like for *my* community, for *my* students?"

In place of the large ensemble model, Greg wonders what it might be like to have a variety of smaller instrumental music groups: "I almost think of it as if we had 15 or 20 little general music classes that would meet at a regular time in terms of scheduling." He immediately acknowledges the logistical difficulties of this situation, however, a very real set of restrictions to which I can also relate as a beginning band director. "I don't know how then that gets pieced into math and English so that wasn't a pull-out [lesson] model. I don't have good, fully formed thoughts here because I've never seen a model like it."

In addition to questioning the *structure* of the large ensemble, Greg also wonders about band *instrumentation*, returning to our "the barrier to entry" discussion: the technical facility, motor skills, and muscle memory demanded of beginning band instrumentalists are compounded by the challenge of learning to read notation. Greg suggests that tone production on most band instruments requires a great deal of commitment and dedication from students; at the same time, he acknowledges, the sound of these instruments and the repertoire designed for them is not always very engaging for students. "And then to what end?" Greg asks, reflecting on this problem:

> Now you have this concert band, especially at the elementary level, but they're not necessarily picking up a lot of enthusiasm from their audience for this thing than they're doing. Parents are tolerating it. But I think kids are pretty smart. They can see through that."

Especially in contrast with his earlier musing about parade audiences that go wild for 90 minutes of steel drum Baby Shark, Greg's question of "to what end" seems especially especially poignant for concert bands. Returning again to the guitar lesson, Greg acknowledges that while this student already possesses the technical skill he needs to be successful in a variety of "traditional" settings—a level five or six NYSSMA[1] solo performance, for example—the engagement piece is missing: "*The entry isn't really opening a door to anywhere [the guitar student] wants to go."*

As I thought about the paradox Greg depicts here in our conversation—high barriers of entry to doors that open undesirable outcomes—I couldn't help wondering if the steel drum ensembles that had taken such a strong hold over his community in the past might hold some advantages over concert band: might the steel drum setting offer aspects of engagement *and* rigor for both beginners and advanced players? Might the steel drum setting, in some ways, offer a partial resolution some of the tension Greg felt around concert band? Out of curiosity, I asked Greg what he thought of the "engagement vs. rigor" problem in the steel drum band setting. Did it still apply?

> Sure it does. . .but I would say that the steel drum band exists on one end of the spectrum where our concert band in school theoretically exists on the other end of the spectrum … To the extent that there's rigor in that introductory level, it really involves just playing together, listening for time, especially if their rhythms are syncopated at all. . .possibly listening for some sort of musical cue about where we are within the arrangement … But [that's] really about as complex as it gets.

Greg explained that at the time when he had four extracurricular steel drum ensembles, he had a group that could play more advanced music: "They were active in their high school music programs—most of them could read and the ones who couldn't learned quickly by rote . . . and the rigor piece was there." He also described the ways in which the steel drum setting facilitated

[1] New York State School Music Association

performances of more advanced music, while also allowing for adaptation of instrumentation, voicings, numbers of players, even the possibility that "there were also ways to adapt that are not necessarily there in quite as accessible fashion in the more traditional groups."

In comparison with the steel drum setting, we talked about the "barriers to entry" according to the degrees of specialization required to produce a concert band—transposing instruments, physical requirements for holding the instruments and producing quality sound on such, the instrumentation ratios demanded by the repertoire. As we talked, I found myself returning to the idea that the steel drum setting seems to resolve so many of these specialization obstacles; Greg's response to my own lament about this issue, speaks to what I have come to view as central to his "engagement/rigor" internal debate:

> Well, I see that as absolutely a huge part of the problem, but it is also a part of what makes those ensembles valuable in the first place … why we've always fought so hard for the intrinsic value of all those programs: because [concert band] is a place where, gosh, you have to put some effort in in order to excel. And if you aren't willing to do that, then you're not going to have a successful run … So that's why the struggle is there—because I do see the value in it, and I know that so much good has come from it for so many years. But boy, as a way to meet the needs of most of our kids, it seems problematic for sure.

Here is where I think a primary source of Greg's internal turmoil lies: although the steel drum setting has much to offer that a music program by way of its multiple points of entry for beginners and more experienced musicians, flexible instrumentation/parts, engaging instrument "sound" and repertoire, conduciveness to rote-learning, I think Greg is worried about the steel drum ensemble's ability, to be *pushed* as a musical medium. Greg's acknowledgement of the specialization in concert band as being both "absolutely a huge part of the problem" while also being "a part of what makes those ensembles valuable in the first place" speaks directly to this tension: that perhaps the complexity of the concert band experience—challenging repertoire, technically-demanding instruments, the combining of so many different parts and sounds—might

offer opportunities for students to reach deeper, musically, than perhaps the steel drum ensemble setting might allow.

I think Greene would have worried about this tension too. Greene had her own "canon" of authors whom she frequently drew upon in her lectures and writing—Merleau-Ponty, Alfred Schütz, Virginia Wolf, Albert Camus; Greene's canon included authors whose works were rich with opportunities for discussion and the possibility of "shocking ourselves into new awarenesses" (Ayers 1998). And while she "demonstrated again and again a resistance to fad, to convention, to dogma of any kind," Greene also held strong opinions—which she continually questioned—around authors whose texts she felt were worthy of our time spent considering them (Ayers 1998). As a student in Greene's educational philosophy classes, William Ayers (1998) recalls Greene saying, "But still, I can't help myself, I wish you would choose Mozart and not rap," a quote that I have been troubled by throughout my study of Greene's work. Ayers continues, however, explaining that then Greene paused amidst her lecture after saying this and added, "But maybe rap is better than Kohlberg in raising sharp moral issues." I think Greg's struggle is similar, maybe as if to say, "I wish you would choose concert band, but perhaps "steel drum Baby Shark" is better than Percy Grainger at bringing us together in the first place.

And yet, Greene also writes that "where standards and rigor are concerned, it is profoundly important to communicate to young people the connection between the discipline or effort they exert and the possibilities of vision" (1995, p. 182). I am reminded again of my own piano lessons as a child (in which I did practice a great deal of Mozart): I surely put forth the discipline and effort necessary to "succeed" at the tasks my teacher assigned me. But did my encounters with the instrument and repertoire afford "possibilities of vision?" "As we ponder educational purposes," Greene elaborates, "We might take into account the possibility that the

main point of education (in the context of a lived life) is to enable a human being to become increasingly mindful with regard to his or her lived situation—and its untapped possibilities" (1995, p. 182). I cannot say that my childhood piano lessons had much to do with the exploration of lived lives, perceived experience, or shocks of awareness, although I do not claim that such experiences are impossible within the Western classical music tradition—I suggest only that my own experience with such did not foster these perceptions and understandings.

I think Greene is reaching for something deeper in these passages—deeper than "rigor" as difficult subject matter, increased workloads, intellectual challenge, higher order thinking, complexity, or even as Greg (whose definition I like best) thinks of it—demonstrating a commitment to art through engagement and progress made. Greene is reaching for artistic engagements that not only challenge students' intellectual faculties but also those that awaken their *consciousnesses* to the lived experiences of others. These "spaces of excellence," as she eventually calls them, come into being when "diverse persons are moved to reach toward the possible" (1995, p. 184).

As I reflect on her comment about "rap music" as remembered by Ayers, I think Greene was likely referring to what Tricia Rose (2008) sees as the highly commodified, industry-funded versions of hip-hop, which often revolve around the glorification of "one-dimensional narratives of Black ghetto life" (p. 3). I think Greene would have been compelled by the sonically complex, socially-minded songs of Black female arts like Janelle Monáe. I think Monáe's queer, feminist, and anti-racist activism would have resonated with Greene; I think Monáe's literary allusion-rich lyrics (particularly of science fiction stories) would have captivated Greene; I think the resistance of both of these women to labels and categories of identity circle around a shared view of the self as becoming. "March to the streets 'cause I'm willing and I'm able," Monáe raps in

"Q.U.E.E.N.", "Categorize me, I defy every label / And while you're selling dope, we're gonna keep selling hope / We rising up now, you gotta deal you gotta cope."

I return to Greg's conundrum, Greene's "spaces of excellence," and "Baby Shark"—a song that Greene would have undoubtedly viewed as insufficiently awakening, but perhaps valuable in its ability to draw members of Greg's community together. What then of concert band? I confess, I do not see the tradition of concert band—or at least my own experiences of such—in this space of excellence by Greene' concept of such either. Does concert band require students to work toward a complex and highly developed skill set to be able to participate? Undoubtedly. Does it present musical challenges to be overcome through discipline and commitment, musical problem-solving that results in sonically-pleasurable experiences? Yes, in my own experience. Have my experiences as a trumpet player in concert band awakened me to the consciousnesses of others, startled my complacency to a diversity of perspectives I might have formerly relegated to 'other?' Not that I can honestly recall.

Is an engagement with spaces of excellence possible in the concert band setting? My own answer to this question (for now, at least) resonates with these words of Greene's: "I doubt that an insistence on a vision of normalized, common reality—to be accepted and mastered by everyone in the same way—will provoke young persons' desires to transcend, to be (as individuals), the best they know how to be" (1995, p. 180). So much of my own experience as a concert band musician and director over the years has revolved around what Greene describes here: emphases on correct interpretations of a musical score, enacted by all members of the band ("normalized, common reality"), the authority of the musical score, itself ("to be accepted"), the necessity of a highly technical skill set through years of practice to be able to participate ("mastered by everyone"), and the continual requirement of sonic conformity across the group

("in the same way"). To be clear, I believe consciousness awakenings are possible in concert band, but I also think this necessitates a certain amount of breaking through an adherence to the artistic structures that are widely viewed as unbreakable. In other words, I don't think the tradition of band allows for much imagination without destabilizing the rigid structures that define it as "concert band."

I perceive dissonance between the tradition of wind bands and the values Greg holds for relevant, socially-embedded music making experience among his students and community; my own opinion (which I voice with hesitancy) after spending the semester in dialogue with Greg is that the tradition of concert band is getting in the way of the imaginative teaching Greg values strives toward on a daily basis. And of course, these words are colored the most by my *own* experience as a band director—of struggling to reconcile my values for creative, democratic learning practices with 60 students in a room much too small to hold them (let alone allow for small group work); of my frustration with the often-inflexible, performance-driven agenda of the band tradition (and by extension, my school administration); of feeling like, as Greg describes, the barriers of entry to these instruments—all pitched in different keys with different finger patterns and embouchure techniques, reading different sets of symbolic notation—guard doors that many students do not even want to open. I confess I am tired of trying to make band (as it is traditionally conceived) "work" in light of the values I have come to hold about musically imaginative encounters with students.

And yet, Greg's question persists: where in the large-ness of his specific teaching community might these spaces for excellence reside? What kinds of musical engagements might he pursue with students that would afford relevant and engaging repertoire, intellectual challenge and commitment, and the potential for awakening to the perceptions and lived lives of others? I

am reminded of the stories Greg told me of his cruise ship days, of reaching toward deeper connections with travelers, of integrating stories that awoke his listeners to aspects of the journey they might not have otherwise noticed. In re-imagining what it meant to be a cruise ship drummer—deepening his musical engagements with the audience through expanding the content of his performances—I think Greg was reaching for spaces of excellence. I wonder with Greg what kinds of musical engagements with students might be suited for fostering these kinds of awakenings in curricular spaces.

The stories Greg told of the community steel drum ensembles in his early teaching career have continued to captivate me throughout this project. It strikes me that there is something about this instrument and its musical setting that has captured the imagination of so many members of Greg's community—that it has tapped something worth exploring further. I continue to return to the idea in my own thinking that the steel drum ensembles provide opportunities for relevance and engagement, the potential for complex and rigorous music making if they are pursued, and a space for awakening to stories and perspectives of others. To this final end, one aspect of the steel drum setting that Greg and I did not discuss was the instrument's cultural situatedness in Afro-Caribbean traditions. I wonder what kinds of cultural understandings might intertwine with Greg's community members in learning about how steel drumming might function in the cultures of its heritage? How might Greg's students and community connect to other ways of being, thinking, perceiving, and living in conjunction with the sounds of the steel drum?

Toward the end of our last discussion centered around the topic of rigor and engagement, Greg acknowledged, "Obviously, a lot of this conversation has been me sort of struggling with things and sort of "showing the dirty laundry"—the things that I don't think are going well." In

reflecting on his high school group—what Greg calls "The Jazz-Rock Band," Greg offers, "I do think when that band was functioning well, it was kind of neat and was pretty impressive for the size of our school . . . they generally sounded pretty good [and] were playing music at a fairly advanced level." Greg explains that while he had originally intended for the group to function as a "wind ensemble," they never quite had the numbers or instrumentation necessary for this reality and instead worked to create a new identity for the group; instead, the group now consists of about 15-20 students who play a variety of musical repertoire on instruments from the concert band, jazz, and rock music traditions. I was disappointed to have been unable to sit in on one of this group's rehearsals before the COVID-19 school shutdowns began. While acknowledging the challenges of programming repertoire, Greg describes the success they'd had over the years in re-mixing a variety of songs to meet the group's needs:

> Oftentimes, [they didn't play] traditional arrangements—it was a mix … sometimes it was more creative stuff like this Real Easy Book stuff and kind of a hodgepodge of things. But they were able to produce a pretty solid sound for a small group that I think was respectable. It was something we could stand behind and be proud of no matter where we visited or no matter who came to see us.

In the case of the Jazz-Rock ensemble, Greg seems to have struck a balance between his rigor and engagement conundrum in a way that feels meaningful. I think it is interesting that Greg explains the formation of this group's identity—its nontraditional instrumentation and "hodgepodge" of repertoire—as having been in response to a lack of personnel to fill a wind ensemble; I wonder if the success this group has experienced in being able to play engaging music in a way that "sounds good" might actually be most related to the fact that it *isn't* a wind ensemble. I wonder if the group's more flexible instrumentation and repertoire selection are part of what has made it more open to being both engaging *and* rigorous for Greg's high school students.

One aspect of Greg's thinking (among many) that I appreciate and admire in our conversations is the extent to which *he continues to suffer the tension* around this "rigor vs. engagement" problem. Although Greg's experience as a music teacher has led him to an enduring understanding of these two concepts as being somewhat at odds in his teaching, Greg frequently qualifies his discussion of such with acknowledgements to the effect of, "the two things are not mutually exclusive" and "I don't think [a particular issue] necessarily fits neatly into that box." During a couple of the later interviews, I brought up statements Greg had made in previous interviews to clarify his intentions: "Yeah, I remember saying that. It is true. But hearing it just brings up all that kind of internal debate again," a sentiment that Greg described in another conversation as "my constant internal dialogue 24/7." His words remind me once again of David Hansen, who acknowledges that "commitment to a practice *without* entertaining doubts about it can order on ideology or close-mindedness" (Hansen, 1995, p. 12). I think back to Greg's initial words to me in an email: "Your description of teachers who see themselves as 'becoming' . . . resonates in a fairly profound way with me, as that is very much a way that I might aspire to describe the teacher that I hope to be." I believe that Greg's ability to continually question his teaching practice, his skepticism toward easy answers, and his desire to prioritize and meet the needs of his individual students and community are essential aspects of his becoming.

Chapter VII

BECOMING STORIES

As I found myself muddling through the business of writing the final chapters of this dissertation—a "discussion section" or "conclusion"—I kept wondering, *what is the point of all these stories I have told?* These stories of becoming—Greg's, Marc's, Charlie's, mine, and yours too, actually—more on that later. Perhaps you have wondered this as well, Reader. It is a frightening question to ask amid the impending deadlines for drafts and defenses, an unsettling, nagging wondering as I worked through revisions of my six preceding chapters, reflecting on hundreds of pages and thousands of hours. In the practical sense, the stories I have told speak to the research questions I posed earlier in this document—"What happens when music teachers are invited to see themselves and their practices as 'becoming?'" Perhaps another way of asking this would be, "What *stories* do music teachers tell when they are invited to see themselves and their practices as becoming?" In the previous chapters you have read *my* stories of *their* stories—Greg's, Charlie's, and Marc's. You have also read stories of my own becoming, which leads to my second question: what qualities of resonance exist between stories of my own becoming and (my perception of) those told by my participants? The "answers" to these questions are all there in the stories, although I can imagine you would probably like it if I produced at least a few categories or themes of resonances related to the latter question—no doubt I would want that if I were you. But I will return to this idea later. Still, the question: why stories? And why would I give you *my story* of *Marc's story*? Or Charlie's, or Greg's? If I'm not even going to pretend to give you objective accounts of their stories, fully "contaminated" by the role I play in it as

researcher and storyteller, what is the point? Wouldn't you rather hear stories from these teachers, themselves?

What I have begun to realize in my writerly becoming—thanks almost entirely to Maxine Greene—that when I reach an impasse such as this question of "why stories," what I am experiencing is not so much a "writer's block" as much as a "thinker's block: "Learning to write is a matter of learning to shatter the silence, of making meaning, of learning to learn" (Greene, 1995, p. 108). What I have begun to understand—and what is quite possibly already obvious to you—is that when this kind of blockage occurs, I need to set my writing goals and deadlines aside and *read*. "But I have already read almost all of Maxine Greene's writing…" I find myself thinking. *Read it again. And others. Something might strike you anew* (the voice of a different internal dialogue that is beginning to take form). I return again to Greene's public musings on her own writing process: "I had to write the peace paper and I didn't know what to write—everything's been said and written. So I read a poem—I used it in the paper. It recaptured me, gave me new perspectives" (Greene, quoted in Jeffers, 1998, p. 77). At the start of this chapter, I desperately needed to be re-captured. And preferably before February 1st, 2021.

Have you ever wondered what causes you to underline passages in books and articles when you read them? It strikes me that although this is something we teachers generally ask our students to do—perhaps by way of its providing visual "evidence" that our students have actively engaged in what they read—we don't often talk about the kinds of *experiences* with text that might prompt an underline. But maybe I am over-generalizing my own experience here by saying "you" when I might otherwise say "I." At times I might underline a passage because it affirms an argument I want to make or a belief I hold, as if to say, "Great, someone smart also thinks what I think!" Or perhaps I might underline a statement I disagree with; maybe I'll

question the passage in my own words along the margins: “But what about ….?” Yet most of the time, I find that when I underline as I read, it is because what I have read somehow *feels* right. Or sounds right. Or maybe it is a passage that succinctly expresses something I believe but have never tried or known how to articulate. I read an emphasis of sorts—something *resonates*—consciously, subconsciously, or somewhere in between. Have you ever read a text with someone *else’s* underlines and annotated passages? It can feel a bit devious—like reading a person’s journal, catching a brief glimpse of their private thoughts—*their* resonances. I once purchased a novel I’d enjoyed for a friend at a used bookstore. After reading the book, my friend mentioned that he had enjoyed seeing which passages were my favorites. “Annotations?” I asked, suddenly realizing that he must have been referring to those made by the novel’s previous owner. “Oh,” he said, sheepishly, “Those weren’t *your* notes?” and confessed that he had read most of the book as a fictitious internal dialogue with “my” underlinings.

I stumbled upon Nigerian poet and storyteller, Ben Okri’s text, *A Way of Being Free*, amid my feverish search for recapture. It’s a thin book, packed with meaning, presented in various forms—essays, poems, thoughts, and aphorisms on storytelling, art, politics, and freedom. And as I read, I found passage after passage of resonance—so many resonances that I began to grow skeptical of my own enthusiastic underlining; was I simply underlining things that “sounded nice” but didn’t really mean anything to me? Yet so much of what I read in those early pages made me think of Greene: Okri’s pluralistic epistemology—“There are as many worlds as there are lives” (Okri, 2014, p. 2); his commentary on the authority and blindness of positivism—“legislators of the world take the world as given” (p. 3) and his musings about a kind of wide-awakeness that made me swear he and Maxine were in cahoots—“We realise that we have been woken for the strange and simple reason that our sleep should be disturbed …from

the shackles of our wilful forgetting" (pp. 6-7). I have met neither Maxine Greene nor Ben Okri in the flesh, but somehow I felt convinced they would have been kindred spirits had their paths crossed; they have become kindred voices in my dissertation, anyhow.

> We live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted — knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves … If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives." (Okri, 2014, p. 37)

This passage points to two ideas that helped push my thinking forward about the nature(s) and purpose(s) of stories in my dissertation: First, that stories are expressions of perceived reality—in this case, the stories Marc, Charlie, and Greg told me about their realities as becoming teachers, my stories of my own becoming, and my stories of their becomings. Okri's words remind me of Turino's idea of the self as "constellations of habits:" that some parts of ourselves have been chosen by our circumstances—"stories planted in us early or along the way"—while others have been chosen—"the stories we planted in ourselves"—choosings which have taken part both consciously and subconsciously. As I mulled these words over, I began to wonder about the stories *I* used to live by—stories of Western Classical music as "high art," stories of reading music notation as essential to musicianship, stories of "Beethoven" and his supposed importance for all students (Charlie's words)—Which of these stories were planted in me? Which did I plant in myself? Which stories did I nurture with water and sunlight, which ones did I pluck from my soul once I became aware of the looming shadows they cast on other stories struggling to grow?

And secondly, in response to my nagging question of "why stories?", Okri suggests that *stories have the power to change reality*: "If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives." The weight of this idea collapsed on me like the unstable tower of textbooks which currently rests next to my computer: Stories have the power to change reality. Coming to this idea was both a relief and a terrifying realization: the stories I have told in this dissertation

are not a pointless waste of time. Great. But was I prepared to unleash them into the world without knowing what they might "do?" What effects they might have? What might be done with them? I write these words with a touch of cynicism, knowing that the scope of my dissertation readership is quite small, echoing the "hopeful pessimism" of Indigenous novelist, Thomas King: "We wrote knowing that none of the stories we told would change the world. But we wrote in the hope that they would" (King, 2005, p. 92). And yet, Okri's words have placed a heavier burden of responsibility on my shoulders toward the stories I tell in this document and the ways in which I have told them. The idea that stories can change perceptions of reality gives my work (and yours) purpose and gravity.

As I read and re-read Okri's commentary on stories and their purposes, continuing to ponder the idea that stories change reality, I was reminded of another quote, one from William Ayers in *Becoming a Teacher*; I had copied this quote into my notes several months ago and returned to it on multiple occasions. It was one of those passages that resonated for reasons I couldn't figure out and whose meaning I couldn't quite explain.

> The world is made up of stories, nothing more—just stories and stories about stories. Telling their stories, trusting their stories, listening actively and empathetically to the stories of others—this is all part of the work of democracy (Ayers, 2019, p. 27).

I substituted a few words in the quote to see what would happen: "My dissertation is made up of stories, nothing more—just stories and stories about stories." That sounded right. "Telling Greg's, Marc's, and Charlie's stories, trusting their stories, listening actively and empathetically to their stories," this passage certainly seemed to illustrate the process I strove to embody throughout the data collection and analysis phases of my work. "This is all part of the work of a dissertation." In my own, small world—a doctoral student trying to complete a dissertation—this quote makes sense to me. But I think it is the scope of Ayers's words that I find difficult to wrap

my mind around: “The *world* is made up of stories, nothing more,” and that telling stories is “part of the work of *democracy*.” Whoa.

And yet as I continue to read more of Okri’s work, I think I understand why Ayers extends the scope of his words—the power of stories—to such a grand scale:

> To poison a nation, poison its stories. A demoralised nation tells demoralised stories to itself. Beware of the storytellers who are not fully conscious of the importance of their gifts, and who are irresponsible in the application of their art: they could unwittingly help along the psychic destruction of their people. (Okri 2014, p. 88)

Throughout his term in office, former United States President Donald Trump told a host of poisonous stories that resonated deeply with the perceived worlds of particular groups of Americans: stories of his conquests of female bodies amid the rise of the #MeToo movement, stories of “fine people on both sides” in the wake of the Charlottesville attack on the peaceful protestors of a White Supremacist rally; stories of White victims in response to the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmad Arbury, and so many other Black Americans; stories of a stolen election which led to a violent insurrection of the U.S. Congressional Capitol building by the former president’s supporters. If anything, I realized, the past four years have taught Americans that stories *do* have the power to shape a multitude of realities. Stories have the power to uphold or destroy a democracy.

I think Okri and Ayers have convinced me that stories matter, that stories can alter our perceptions of reality, that stories can move people into reality-altering action. In one sense, I am grateful to have a justification for the work I have done in this dissertation, for the stories I have told. But to a greater extent, I am terrified of the responsibility this realization places on the work. I would rather imagine the ways in which my stories will contribute positively to the world of music education; I would rather think my stories will widen the perceptions of music educators in ways that will allow them to reach more of their students. Yet Greene challenges the

naivety of this kind of thinking: “Social imagination involves looking at the world as if it could be otherwise; but we are fully aware that we must always confront the question of whether “otherwise” is always better” (Greene, quoted in Ayers & Miller, 1998, pp. 156–157). Let us approach the power of storytelling with awe and wonder, as well as with a conscious responsibility—a reverence for the weight of the task. We will make it to the brighter aspects of storytelling together by the end of this chapter, I promise, but first let us dwell a bit longer in the dangers spoken of by Maxine Greene, Ben Okri, Thomas King, and Janet Miller of the traps and pitfalls along the way—knowing and believing with full consciousness that stories have the power to change reality.

Dangers of Storytelling

Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous. (King, 2005, p. 9)

Imagination can widen our perceptions, prod at our complacencies, give rise to action—yet Greene reminds us that “imagination does not only open to visions of the beneficent and the decent” (Greene, quoted in Ayers & Miller, 1998). Imagination has given rise to high-stakes testing, to “big data,” to the idea that worlds of learning can be standardized, quantified, predicted, measured, replicated, and the notion that somehow we’ll feel better, more secure, more in control once this happens. Former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos told stories of a world where pandemic aid was siphoned from urban public schools and pumped into private, religious establishments. DeVos imagined a world in which loan forgiveness agreements with teachers at Title IX schools were reneged upon. DeVos’s re-imagined world enacted the erasure of legal protections for transgender students and disproportionately disciplined racial minority students. Stories of pure poison, though sweet poison for many. Some of these poisons

eventually became a politically validated reality; others were thwarted or ignored. Yet each of the poisons DeVos told remain in our nation's collective consciousness. Maybe another conservative politician will take them up again one day—a new formulation for ruin. For, as King writes, "Once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories you are told" (King, 2005, p. 10).

What kinds of stories are dangerous and how do we know? I confess I continue to be unsettled by this question, especially given that I have spent the previous 200+ pages telling you stories. Should I have told you more about the racism present at Charlie's school, about his administration's effort to censor Mother Song's music? Should I have told you about their denial of Charlie's request to teach his students about the history of hip-hop? Should I have told you about Ákat's incarcerated father? Following from the epistemological underpinnings of phenomenological work, Okri reminds us that harm flows from the stories of "those who refuse to see the fluid nature of reality, who cannot perceive that each individual reality is different." I think Charlie's story of administrative censorship—and my own story of Charlie's story—is worth telling; I think it has the power to provoke in readers questions of colonialism, to cause readers to wonder about power structures present in their own worlds of music education. It has caused me to look at my own experience as a teacher in an international school with new eyes—to recognize the imperialism of our Americentric curriculum, to wonder what I might have done differently had I known of Charlie's story back then. And yet, I have only told you two stories—Charlie's and mine—two perspectives; perhaps you will argue that I have only told you one story, since it is through my own that Charlie's story is funneled in this document. I haven't told you the stories of how Charlie's administrators perceive these mandates because I do not know

them. The point is, returning to Okri, that I cannot assume my story—my vantage as storyteller—is the same as Ákat's, the administrators', students', parents', or community members' stories. I cannot even say that my story is the same as yours, Reader, even though you have read the very words I have written, because you bring your own stories to mine—your own thoughts, your own wonderings. When I project my reality onto you, I might "close down" rather than "open possibilities" for your own storied reflections (Miller, 1998, p. 151).

Toward becoming aware of the singularity of our own vantages, Janet Miller cautions us to move beyond invitations to "just tell your story" (Miller 1998, p. 150). When I asked Charlie to tell me the story of his school climate, he told me that his administration embraced the whole of his students' Native American identities, pointing to the days of cultural celebration that his students had been granted. These "unproblematized recountings," Miller reminds us, "of what is taken to be transparent and linear 'reality'" are often presented as "unitary, fully conscious, and non-contradictory" (Miller, 1998, p. 150). And yet as Charlie and I continued to discuss the racial tensions present at his school, Charlie began to tell new stories that countered this initial story: he told me about his administration's censorship of specific musical traditions and about his principal's reticence to welcome Mother Song as a culture bearer. I too was reminded of my own experience teaching at an international school and found myself wondering, alongside Charlie, whether or not we had actually embraced the cultures of our Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Saudi Arabian students, or if we had simply sought to replace them with our own under the guise of appreciation for the superficial, physical aspects of culture (i.e., "Culture Day.").

When I told the story of Charlie's school to my dissertation seminar, my colleagues problematized my recounting (of Charlie's recounting) further: had I considered the perspectives

of a number of postcolonial writers? Had I sufficiently problematized my own role as a White researcher in an indigenous context? Dialogue with others who are willing to question and challenge our stories can help us mitigate some of the dangers of singularity about which Miller cautions. The co-creation of meaning between storyteller and audience—interviewee and interviewer in my case—can expand each others' perspectives, so that we might become more aware of "the filters through which we perceive our work." (Miller, 1998, p. 151). The stories we tell should challenge us to think more deeply about our own positionalities, to "take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get" (Behar, 1996, p. 14).

Miller (1998) and Silin (1998) also caution against storytelling that is contextually underdeveloped, void of time, place, persons, and influences. In my view, decontextualized stories are much of what drives the branding of educational products and initiatives in schools: "Kagan Structures," "Understanding By Design" ("UbD"), "Atlas Rubicon" (curriculum management system), "'I Can Statements," to name just a few I encountered during my beginning years as a full-time elementary music teacher. The stories about these products and movements are all essentially the same: "Here is pedagogical structure A or curricular organizational tool B—look at how well it worked in Ms. Smith's chemistry class or Mr. Anderson's English class. Here's how it can work in yours!" These educational success stories become "a new canon, one that can be as narrowly conceived as traditional forms of positivism" (Silin, 1998, p. 241).

Consider the diversity statement I prepared for a recent job application: what stories do I tell about myself or my former students in order to convince you my words are worthy of your attention? I echo the words of Kruse (2020) when I say that "at my best," the stories in my diversity statement might show you "I am a well-intentioned visitor, a worthwhile collaborator,

and an accomplice to culture;" yet "at my worst, I am a privileged academic making a career out of associating myself with marginalize[d] communit[ies]" (p. 2). How can I convince you I am a person who cares about including and supporting the voices of diverse perspectives in my classroom without first allowing you to hear from these voices, themselves? What stories might my *students* tell you about their own contextually-situated lives and about our time together in the classroom? How might my *students'* perspectives shape the way you read my diversity statement? Perhaps they are the people who should be writing these stories about me instead.

What if I told you the story of Marc and his emerging ensembles model without also telling you about Marc's upbringing in the Black COGIC church, his experiences making music with his brothers and sister at home, his yearning for more musical opportunities than his undergraduate music programs allowed. Or the challenges Marc might have faced as a Black man finding work as a teacher in rural, upstate New York? Would you appreciate the ways in which these complex aspects of his identity came together in that moment I witnessed between Marc and his acoustic guitar, the two White middle school girls, and a Michael Jackson song? Storytelling has the capacity to "capture the complexity, specificity, and connectedness of seemingly discrete events," Silin reminds us (1998, p. 241); yet, we must also attend to the situatedness of our stories within social and political contexts. I told you the story of Marc and his emerging ensembles not because I hope you will try to *be* Marc or organize your next concert exactly as he has done, but because I hope his story will inspire you to reach for musical alternatives in your own classroom that make sense of your own stories, your students' stories, and the stories you write together in class.

Why Tell Stories (Why Risk the Danger?)

> *Storytelling is always, quietly, subversive … when you think it is harmless, that is when it springs its hidden truths, its uncomfortable truths, on you. It startles your complacency. And when you no longer listen, it lies silently in your brain, waiting. Stories are very patient things. They drift about quietly in your soul … they infect your dreams. They infect your perceptions … [stories] are living things; and their real life begins when they start to live in you. Then they never stop living, or growing, or mutating, or feeding the groundswell of imagination, sensibility, and character. (Okri, 2014, p. 35)*

Now that we have trudged through some of the miry landscape—the dark side of storytelling—we might once again return to the question: Why tell stories? Particularly in light of the responsibility associated with such that we have begun to explore: Why risk these dangers by continuing to tell our stories and the stories of others? I return to the words of Ben Okri: stories have the power to startle our complacency (Okri, 2014, p. 35). In other words, stories can provoke what Greene called "shocks of awareness" by awakening us to the vantages of others. "When we look out on the world with all its multiplicity of astonishing phenomena, do we see that only one philosophy can contain, explain, and absorb everything?" Okri asks. "I think not. The universe will always be greater than us" (Okri, 2014, p. 16). We need stories because reality is plural; we need stories in order to reach beyond ourselves.

In the story Charlie told me about learning that his student, Ákat, had an incarcerated father, Charlie remarked on his own ignorance toward the quality of life for some of his students who lived on the reservation: "I had no idea that it was a vast majority of their population whose families do face criminal charges or have a family member that is in jail or in prison," he reflected. "I always thought 'they have their own land, casinos, they're doing their own thing." It was Ákat's story that had awakened Charlie that day over their lunch conversation to the challenges of her own life as well as to the *hidden structures* that enforce oppressive living conditions for many Native Americans: an incarceration rate double that of White Americans,

widespread poverty, a contaminated environment that led to health concerns for many Native Americans on the reservation, community controversy around the casino, a designated area of land too small to support the growing community. Ákat's stories of life on the reservation awakened Charlie to the systemic inequities Native Americans face and began to see firsthand how these oppressive structures impacted his individual students on a daily basis; the stories startled his complacency. They startled mine as well. What would it have been like to grow up with a parent in prison? How would I have dealt with the strain it would have posed on myself and my family? How might it have affected my schoolwork or my engagement in the musical activities I treasured throughout my childhood? Perhaps the story startled you too.

Okri shows us that stories have the power not only to awaken the reader (or listener) to other ways of being and perceiving, but that they also elicit actively imaginative responses. And here is where you come in, Reader! "This cannot be said enough: it is readers who make the book," Okri writes. "A book unread is a story unlived … [stories] are a dialogue between souls" (Okri, 2014, p. 34). This dissertation contains several layers of storytelling and reception of stories. Charlie, Marc, and Greg are all storytellers, of course, whose stories I strove to understand with the openness and empathy of an active listener, knowing all the while that my own voice would inevitably color my written presentations of their stories to you. And my relationships with these teachers are different than my relationship with you. The conversations I had with Greg, Charlie, and Marc, included real-time, back-and-forth dialogue with questions, stories, follow-up questions, and my own storied responses. As I think back in particular to the conversation I had with Greg about his "rigor vs. engagement conundrum," I remember the intense yearning—the urgency with which Greg expressed his desire to resolve this supposed paradox. I recall Greg's audible lament when he talked about trying to find ways to engage his

students in meaningful, relevant music experiences that also had the ability as an artistic medium to be pushed deeper, further. And I remember how many times he thanked me for being willing to engage in these conversations with him, to be a sounding board for the stories he told—"my constant internal dialogue"—most of which he rarely had the opportunity to share. I remember the kinship in conversation that we formed throughout these conversations around our shared concerns and questions about our practices as music teachers, such that Okri's description of stories as "dialogues between souls" resonates deeply.

Fine (2006) points toward Maxine Greene's work as reaching toward a kind of "provocative generalizability," that is, "researchers' attempts to move their findings toward that which is not yet imagined, not yet in practice, not yet in sight" (p. 100). Here, Fine is not referring to "generalization" as a quantitative, statistical measure of significance, but rather to the idea that stories of individuals—which detail the specificity of lived lives and perceived worlds—can spark resonance in the consciousnesses of readers. "Provocative generalizability" is the idea that something universal can be found in the particular—that shared meaning can exist across diverse contexts. Similarly, Bochner and Ellis (2016) suggest,

> When a story resonates, it moves beyond itself by questioning, probing, and expressing feelings that connect lives lived … these stories do not tell people precisely what to do. Rather, they take readers into one universal struggle or another that exemplifies ways of dealing with the difficulties of living a good life." (p. 237)

As the author of this text, it is my greatest hope that something particular in the stories I have told you (and others who read this document) will ring true to your own stories in some way—a distinct detail which might also reverberate throughout your consciousnesses or bring about a sense of closeness to your own stories. And yet as the storyteller, I cannot predict or name that which will be generalizable in its resonance: that is for you to determine, Reader: only you can know the particulars that bring you closer as you read, think, feel, and experience the stories.

And yet, Reader, I am left to wonder: if you are reading with a pen in hand, what of this document have you underlined? If with a cursor, what have you dragged into a highlight? What stories outside of those told here have you imagined? Of what or of whom have you been reminded as you have read? What annotations have you scrawled into the margins, either literally or figuratively? Where have you felt dissonance or tension in response to my stories? Have any of these stories told by Greg, Marc, Charlie, or me re-captured you in any way? I confess that although I may never know your answers to these questions, I am still very curious. "The mystery of storytelling is the miracle of a single living seed which can populate whole acres of human minds. It is the multiplicity of responses which a single text can generate within the mind's unfailing capacity to wonder (Okri, 2014, p. 34). You and I might underline the same passage in reading Marc's humorous story of accidentally playing secular music in a sacred setting, for example, and yet, your own resonance with this story might be entirely different from mine. "Readers create the world from words … reading is a co-production between writer and reader" (Okri, 2014, p. 33). This is a mystery, indeed.

And while Greene held firmly to a pluralistic epistemology—the idea that you and I will inevitably make different meanings from the same passage of text—she also yearned for the possibility of shared meanings, commonalities, or what she called "collective consciousness." Kridel (1998) warns of the dangers of assuming shared meaning, especially in light of power dynamics between disparate groups; in asserting shared meaning, storytellers run the risk of imposing false or contradictory consciousnesses on their readers. Yet Okri, like Greene, is unwilling to accept that the idea that multiple realities—which reflect the uniqueness of consciousness—prohibit us from making meaningful connections with others:

> It may seem that because we live in a fractured world the art of storytelling is dead. It may seem that because we live in a world without coherent belief, a world that has lost its

> center, in which a multitude of contending versions of reality clamour in the mind, that storytelling and enchantment are no longer relevant. This is a sad view . . . that there are no continuities in the human experience, and no magical places resident in us that we can call up in one another. (Okri 2014, p. 24)

How can we respect the plurality of experiences and perceptions—particularly those of historically marginalized peoples—while also working toward and hoping for connection? "How can we reconcile the multiple realities of human lives with shared commitment to communities infused once again with principles?" Greene asks (1995, p. 197).

The principles Greene writes of here are those of equity, equality, and freedom, toward which we can work together in spite of our multiple realities through showing care and concern for one another; these principles must be "*chosen* by living human beings against their own life-worlds and in light of their lives with others, by persons able to call, to say, to sing, and—using their imaginations, tapping their courage—to transform" (Greene, 1995, p. 198). Charlie's desire to learn about and incorporate the music of his Native American students is a way in which he is striving to work "against his life-world," (his own privileged vantage of reality); he is working against the privilege of his Whiteness and maleness (i.e., "no offense to Beethoven") by reaching toward equity and the inclusion of musics outside his own comforts; he is working against his power and authority as "teacher" by inviting Mother Song into his classroom as a musical leader. When we are willing to let ourselves be startled by lived realities that are not our own and when we choose to work toward a more just, equitable society alongside others, we are working toward collective consciousness. Okri agrees with Greene, suggesting that stories can help us call upon one another's humanity: "It is precisely in a fractured, broken age that we need mystery and a reawoken sense of wonder. We need them in order to begin to be whole again" (Okri, 2014, p. 32). We need Mother Song's music to expose the frequency with which Native women are domestically abused; we need Marc's story of a disengaged music education major who

almost didn't become a teacher to help challenge and re-shape undergraduate music programs; we need Greg's story of a bored cruise ship drummer-turned-storyteller-turned-educator to understand the social and community-focused aspects of musical meaning. We need these stories to help us see beyond ourselves.

Re-imagining Reality: Stories that Move us into Action

The worst realities of our age are manufactured realities. It is therefore our task, as creative participants in the universe, to redream our world. The fact of possessing imagination means that everything can be re-dreamed. (Okri 2014, p. 40)

The above quote is one I remember underlining with a vigorous enthusiasm as I read—perhaps because it reminded me of Greene and her concept of social imagination, and perhaps also because the ways I perceive Greg, Charlie and Marc as perpetual re-dreamers and re-formers of their work as music teachers continue to provide excitement, re-capturing, and sustenance throughout my work on this dissertation. And yet, Greene questions my excitement: *Are you sure this re-dreamed version of music education is "better?" Do the imagined realities of your stories involve work concerned with equity, equality, freedom, care, concern for others?*

Of Charlie and his classroom, I have told you stories of a White, male music teacher who is reckoning with his privilege and striving to better understand the cultural backgrounds of his students. I have told you stories of female composer packets and of Charlie's relationship with Mother Song; I have told you stories of a teacher who is learning to resist the colonialist powers at play in his school, to recognize the learned racist patterns exhibited by himself and his White students. I tell you Charlie's story because it is also, in part, my own: because through listening to the stories of Charlie's becoming within the specific context of where and whom he teaches, I have been troubled by my own identity as a White woman—frequencies of which I have been

unaware around the lives of indigenous Americans; because Charlie's story has challenged me to reconsider aspects of my work with non-White students; because Charlie's unanswered questions around how to meet the needs of his marginalized students in the context of social structure of racism and power are also my own.

Of Marc and his classroom, I have told you stories about a teacher who has made large, structural changes to his classes, schedule, and curriculum in an effort to work toward more relevant musical opportunities for his students. I have told you stories of a teacher who strives to be both a musical participant and leader of his students, a teacher who prioritizes musical communion— "Hey—let's play this together!—over competition, a teacher who prefers to participate with rather than perform for his music students and their school community; you have heard stories of a music teacher who seeks to de-privilege the "Ivory Tower Voice" and authority of Western classical-centered music in his classroom by honoring his students' own musical interests. I have told you stories about Marc's emerging ensembles because I think they have allowed him to connect with students in ways that are uniquely open—because I think these ensembles allow Marc to meet students who might not be interested in what Western Classical-focused music education is (in Marc's words) "serving up." I have told you stories of Marc's becoming because they are also related to my own—because the musical experiences of Marc's childhood that grew his ability to perform open, creative, and improvisatory settings stand in stark contrast to mine—because Marc is the kind of flexible, participatory musician I hope to become someday.

Of Greg and his classroom, I have told you stories of a teacher who is deeply invested in the community where he lives and works, a teacher whose desire for a kind of "seamless lifestyle" (Greg's phrase) between work and home life also revolves around his belief in the

embeddedness of music education within his community. I have told you stories of a teacher who is never satisfied with easy answers, a teacher who continues to struggle with the question of how to engage his students in musical experiences that they find meaningful and captivating while also providing opportunities for continued and rigorous deepening of their musicianship. You have heard stories of a teacher whose community involvement extends far beyond the music classroom into other acts of service toward his community: delivering meals to students and their families amid the COVID-19 quarantine and school shut-downs, volunteering to acquire an administrative certification in order to offer his school some stability in its leadership, and organizing community ensembles for adults who want to be involved in a musical ensemble. I tell you Greg's stories because they are, in part, my own; because Greg and I share a kinship in hashing out complicated questions in a way that feels productive even if we don't reach any firm conclusions. I tell you the stories of Greg's drive to contribute positively to his community through music and education because it inspires me—because most of my own musical engagements have been relatively self-focused over the years.

Becoming Stories

"Quietly or dramatically, storytellers are reorganisers of accepted reality, dreamers of alternative histories, disturbers of deceitful sleep" (Okri 2014, p. 52).

Through the process of writing chapter, Maxine Greene, Ben Okri, William Ayers, and Thomas King have shown me that stories matter a great deal—that *telling* stories is accompanied by a fair bit of responsibility. And yet, Silin (1998) reminds us that "too often, we fail to ask how our stories will move our listeners to action" (Silin 1998, p. 242). Silin suggests that the sharing of stories ought to be intended to foster deeper connections to the social worlds we inhabit and to resist the structures of power—however great or small—that work against principles of freedom,

equity, and equality in our classrooms (Silin 1998, p. 243). While I cannot yet say how the stories I have told you have changed my work as a teacher, I *can* say that they have changed the way I think about teaching, that the soil for my own growth as a teacher is now richer than when I first began this project. Do you remember the story I told you at the beginning of this document, of my fumbling through a piano lesson on the Star-Spangled Banner, Jimi Hendrix, and concepts of music as protest? My hope in telling that story—a story of my own floundering, of grappling with my relationship to patriotic music, of wondering how to teach toward a plurality of perspectives and engagements in my classroom—is that it will move both you and I into conscious action in our classrooms. I hope that because of this story, you and I will be better equipped to explore a diversity of perspectives around what it means to be American in our music classrooms, to encourage our students toward their own, creative re-imaginations of patriotic music. I hope this story will help our students reach for shared meaning as they consider how our engagements with patriotic music might reflect principles of equity, equality, justice, and freedom.

Throughout the time I have spent on this dissertation, my primary focus has revolved around *stories of becoming*: looking for stories of becoming, listening to stories of becoming, thinking about and analyzing stories of becoming, and finally, telling you stories of becoming. And yet what Maxine Greene and Ben Okri have helped me understand is that my dissertation is also about the *becoming of stories*. Okri's words have continued to resonate particularly strongly as I near the end of this document:

> My prayer is to be able to write stories that, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, can be read so deeply that they are not read at all, but you become the story, while the story lasts. With the greatest of writers, you continue to become more of the story long after you have finished it. (Okri 2014, p. 39)

What I am realizing throughout this process is that stories matter: Stories can and do shape reality by startling our complacency to the realities of others; stories can help us reach for shared meaning with others; stories can help us re-imagine a more just, equitable, free society; and stories can move us into action as we become them. I humbly echo Okri's and Eliot's wish that one or two of the stories I have told you in this document—stories of Greg's becoming, Charlie's becoming, Marc's becoming, and my own—will become a small part of your consciousness, a faint recollection when you return to your own classroom, when you plan your syllabus, when you converse with your students. Okri reminds us that "stories are very patient things. They drift about quietly in your soul … infect[ing] your dreams," and that "their real life begins when they start to live in you" (Okri 2014, p. 35). I humbly hope that one of the stories I have told will continue to live in you.

Chapter VII

STORIES OF COURAGE

As I began this work around stories of music teachers and their becomings, I went in search of "qualities of resonance," or in Michelle Obama's words, patterns in the "sounds of striving" between myself and these three teachers. When I initially conceived of a final chapter for this document, I imagined myself coming to a series of themes or categories of resonance; I thought I would read through the stories I wrote, analyze the kinds and qualities of resonant responses I had experienced, and present those to you in some sort of thematized manner. But now, after living with these stories and living *in* them for the past year, reducing them to a schematic or set of essential themes seems too trite, watered down, perhaps even disingenuous. When I tried to think about how I might describe the resonance I experienced in listening to and retelling the stories of Greg, Charlie, and Marc, I kept coming up with large, abstract concepts such as "openness," "flexibility," and "responsivity" that seemed to flow into one another too readily to be structurally meaningful; these words or categories felt more like distant approximations than the experience of resonance, itself. In the end, I think the answers to my research questions are best expressed through the stories, themselves.

"What stories do music teachers tell when they are invited to view themselves as becoming?" I asked at the beginning of this document. The stories I have told you of Greg, Marc, and Charlie, are some of those stories: they are stories of childhood music making, stories of reaching toward or being called to the vocation of teaching (Hansen, 1995), stories of old values and new ones, stories of striving to meet the contextually-situated needs of their school communities, stories of striving to teach in ways that feels authentic to their becoming identities.

In my second question, I asked, “What qualities of resonance exist between the music teacher becomings of Greg, Marc, Charlie and my own?” I think the answer to this question is also nested in the stories—the ways that these teachers reminded me of my own teaching contexts, my own growth as a child musician, the ways in which my own stories engaged with theirs in the preceding pages. I return to the Ayers quote from the previous chapter: “The world is made up of stories, nothing more—just stories and stories about stories. (Ayers, 2019, p. 27). And yet, I don’t think Ayers means that stories are “just stories” in the sense that they are less meaningful or less important than theory, or that we cannot abstract ideas from them. I think what Ayers is saying is that stories—lived lives and perceived worlds—are not only *how* we make sense of our experiences, but *what* that sense is composed of, perhaps even how we express it. Lives lived are “enstoried” knowing and being.

In part, I have told you about some of my own resonances with the teaching lives of Marc, Charlie, and Greg, all of which are laden with values: values about music, education, and identity; values about knowledge, sources of knowledge, processes of acquiring knowledge—conceptions of and journeys toward “coming to know” ourselves and our students. I have told you stories about the strivings of these music teachers that somehow captured pieces of my own, not necessarily because they mirrored my own—indeed, some did—but also because they intrigued, inspired, or re-captured me. I hope one of these stories will re-capture you in some way or another too, although I expect your own may be vastly different from mine.

Shared Values

Each of the teachers in these stories work in contexts entirely different from my own, with students entirely different from my own students; no doubt they are different from yours too. And yet throughout my interactions with these teachers, I found mutuality among the values

we hold about music education. In Greg, I found a kinship with a teacher who enjoyed hashing out the "big questions," a teacher who didn't shy away from difficult conversations on account of more "practical concerns" such as impending concerts, rehearsals, instrumentation, etc., as I have often found to be the case in speaking with band directors, with all their public pressures. In Charlie, I found commonalities among a teacher who has spent time teaching students from cultures very different from his own; a teacher who is in the middle of reckoning with his own positionality and the privilege that accompanies our roles as White teachers who teach diverse bodies of students; given that music teachers are disproportionately White (91%) compared to the public school populations they serve (48% White, 15% Black; 27% Hispanic, 5% Asian, 5% mixed race and "other"), I believe we need more teachers like Charlie who are willing to work toward destabilizing their privilege (Elpus 2016; Elpus and Abril, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

I also discovered a resonance between Charlie's and my shared desire for the learning in our classroom to translate directly into students' lives outside of class, in situations of students' choosing, through his teaching for musical independence. While independence is undoubtedly a goal for many music teachers, the way Charlie taught for this end directly in the ukulele youtube tutorials lesson seems unique; rather than pointing to a favorite performance in response to my question about sustenance as a teacher, Charlie told the story of his student who borrowed a ukulele and learned a chosen song at home. The centrality of this value of Charlie's resonates strongly with my own. Marc's story of respecting students' own preferences for various modes of music making (i.e., strumming chords along with Bob Dylan albums) also clusters around this resonance: students making choices about how to engage in music in their lives outside of school, and music teachers who respect these choices and strive to support them through their

curricular aims. Greg's discussion of rigor as being about students showing some amount of progress through commitment to their instrument outside of school— "I don't even care what they play, just show me something you're excited about and that you cared enough to work on"—also emphasizes this value.

In different ways, each teacher points to the idea of smaller, more flexible groups of students as being conducive to the kinds of learning they value. Greg's re-imagining of concert band as, "almost if we had 15 or 20 little general music classes," Marc's emerging ensembles, and Charlie's discussion of how his general music classes are more conducive to deep discussions and student-centered learning all resonate with my own experience as both a general music teacher and large ensemble director (i.e., see Scarlato, 2021). No doubt you noticed the dissonance I experienced in Charlie's 80-person middle school choir rehearsal and Greg's middle school concert band rehearsal. My descriptions of each of those settings emphasize the challenges posed for relevant, student-centered pedagogy: both rehearsals took place at the end of the day amid a multitude of interruptions from phone calls and announcements; both descriptions emphasized the difficulty of engaging a group of students too large for the classroom they inhabited; both highlighted the difficulties experienced by each director of meeting the needs of individuals and groups while also keeping the rest of the class engaged. In our conversations, both Greg and Charlie lamented the lack of musical productivity they felt in these rehearsals and communicated feelings of doubt around being able to work toward relevant music experiences with their students in these settings. Most likely you also noticed that my descriptions of Marc's emerging ensembles rehearsals had a contrasting feel—that "chill vibe"—to these descriptions of chaotic large ensembles, frustrated directors, and teacher-centered pedagogy. Let me be clear when I say that the dissonance I experienced in these large ensemble

rehearsals is largely in response to the format and structure of these musical settings, not with the directors, themselves. I have much respect and empathy for Charlie and Greg as music teachers for whom concert choir and band are challenging parts of their job descriptions; the dissonance I experienced in these settings is inextricably related to the frustrations I experienced with my own ensembles for six years as a beginning band director. Observing Greg and Charlie's rehearsals and listening to them reflect on these classes afterward brought back many of my frustrations as a large ensemble director. I think this was, in part, why the intimacy and openness apparent in Marc's emerging ensembles has resonated so strongly for me.

Fascinations

While some of what I heard of my participants' becomings and teaching contexts resonated because of shared values between these teachers and me, some of what I encountered resonated for other reasons: what I think of as "fascinations." In other words, the kind of music making and teaching I saw and heard about captured my imagination in ways that felt new or different from my own experiences as a musician and music teacher. I was fascinated with the stories Marc told me about the aural music tradition of his upbringing in the COGIC church: learning to play the piano from his brother, carrying a tape recorder around with him to learn from others, sitting on the bench with keyboardists at his church and learning to follow along. My own skill acquisition at the piano was so different from Marc's as a child: focused on method books, skill progressions, contests, competitions, exams, always reaching for the next predetermined "level" to attain. Like young Michelle Obama, I yearned to explore the anticipated "songs at the back of the book," to more fully explore the sounds of my keyboard, to receive support in improvising some of my own imaginings.

Conversely, Marc's piano education seemed to be much more context-driven in that he learned to play the kinds of music required by a given situation. I love his stories of learning to follow his father's preaching and am fascinated by the acute sensitivity Marc developed in this time period in learning to follow his father's tonal shifts. I was captivated by Marc's stories of "secular transgression" in sacred settings, of Marc's shock when the people at the revival started rebuking devils upon hearing the rhythmic accompaniment he had selected. In each of these stories, the development of Marc's musicianship are integral to the musical roles he plays—the patterns, riffs, progressions he had internalized—rather than his ability to read notation, perform for judge, or adhere to the specific demands of one teacher. I think Marc's becoming as a young musician is fascinating to me in part because it is so different from my own, and because in some ways, it seems to embody an openness—a freedom to express and create—that my own had lacked.

Another part of why Marc's own music education fascinates me and resonates so strongly is because I see it as being directly tied to the kind of musician Marc is today—the kind of flexible, multi-genre, mash-up-of-a-musician who can "hear" his way into a variety of musical settings on various instruments—that I wish I was (Allsup, 2016). I think the aural-based music education that Marc had in learning to play piano at home and in church with his family members—"making music together"—is a large part of what we need more of in music education. His story also resonates deeply with the part of my own becoming as a teacher that has begun to relinquish the value I once held for teaching students to read standard Western music notation. I think these stories of Marc's musical becoming (remember Marc's comment, "My brother wasn't old enough to read, but he was old enough to *hear*?") illustrate the idea that musicality is so much more than the ability to read notes on a page, that it's an embodied

experience of sound rather than a visual representation of such. I think Marc's story of musical becoming is important for music education because it reminds us of this embodiment.

In listening to Greg's stories, I continue to find fascination in the calling he felt to serve his community through music: his departure from a lucrative performing career, a move across the country, his journey back to the rural hometown of his childhood and school of his own high school years. I admire Greg's firm orientation toward service as a music teacher and the number of ways he has strove to reform his ensembles in order to better serve his community: from marching band to mardis gras band, to steel drum ensemble, to concert band, to "busking" with students in the libraries, coffee shops, awards dinners, lobbies, and hallways. Greg models his own value for a musical lifestyle that extends beyond the boundaries of his class schedule for his students on a daily basis and encourages them to find their places with music in society; the idea that music can be a tool students might use to engage with their community is a central focus of Greg's becoming as both a musician and teacher. I think I find Greg's becoming fascinating, in part, because I have never felt the kind of affinity to a specific place like Greg has for his hometown; I have only begun in recent years to adopt more of a socially-embedded view of music and music education. I think Greg's story of "music as community connection" and the willingness Greg demonstrates to change his musical involvements based on the needs of his community are dispositions we need more of in music education (Turino, 2008).

With Charlie, I find myself continually in admiration of the ways he strives to navigate the tumultuous waters of racism, White privilege, oppression, and power in his classroom with humility as he is striving to become a culturally-responsive teacher in his school context (Gay, 2018). As we all likely recall, the beginning years of being a teacher are difficult: forming general classroom facilitation strategies, learning to plan curricular units and lessons, developing

the confidence to advocate for one's program and needs as an individual—the first few years of teaching can be intense. When I think about Charlie as a young teacher who is going through these beginning teacher experiences while at the same time negotiating a school environment that is daily impacted by generations of racial tension, I admire and respect his journey as a teacher. In *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo (2018) writes about the necessity for White people to build stamina in learning to conceptualize, talk about, and accept their racial privilege in society; her text details story after story of DiAngelo's own interactions with White people (particularly men) who react defensively and angrily to the simple notion that they are privileged members of society. Yet Charlie seems to have developed quite a bit of this stamina already as a young White, male teacher and speaks of his privileged position freely in conversation. As a White teacher who is also in the process of reckoning with and striving to de-privilege my own Whiteness in the classroom, I admire the clarity of conviction Charlie holds in this aspect of his becoming.

Acts of Public and Private Courage

Instead of trying to parse out a series of themes to structure the dimensions of my connection to stories of Charlie, Marc, and Greg, I find myself once again returning to Okri's words for a way of understanding the significance these stories hold in my own becoming: "All these marvels, acts of private and public courage, all this and much more constitutes for me the joys of storytelling" (Okri, 2014, p. 57). In trying to put into words the kinds of resonances I have experienced between my own becoming and the stories of music teacher becomings in this document, I think Okri's naming of "private and public acts of courage" reverberates most strongly—these words capture the complex joys I have felt in bearing witness to the becomings of Marc, Greg, and Charlie, and in telling their stories alongside my own.

John Dewey (1916/1923) reminds us of the stakes involved in teaching and learning: "All thinking requires *risk"* (p. 174) and that a kind of "courageous intelligence" is required of teachers and students who engage in creative, imaginative, experimental, and intellectual risk-taking (p. 373). In the most basic of ways, each of these three teachers took courageous risks in spending time with me; talking with me, telling their stories; inviting me into their classrooms, allowing me to witness their situated teaching contexts; trusting me as I tell their stories alongside my own. Although I did my best to explain my research orientation and ethos to each of these teachers at the beginning of our communication, although I sought to maintain a posture of empathy and respect for each man's unique teaching context throughout our interactions, and although I tried to assure my participants my work was more concerned with posing questions than delivering judgments, these teachers invited me into their classrooms without knowing for certain what might transpire in our interactions. Even more, they each welcomed me into their teaching lives for four months amid a global pandemic and the radical shifts to online learning that mark our collective memories of the "Spring 2020 semester." I think back on my initial meetings with each of these teachers, particularly with Greg, whose gentle and protective questions about the kind of research I was planning to enact eventually opened up into a welcoming invitation: acts of courage are what Marc, Greg, and Charlie each exhibited in accepting my invitation to view their teaching identities as becoming rather than static, to engage in what I have perceived as open and honest dialogue about our practices as music teachers, to humbly reflect on their teaching careers, and to be willing, in Greg's words, "to air the dirty laundry" of their becomings alongside the more crisp, clean, pressed pieces of cloth that hang on the clotheslines of their vocational lives.

Dewey also described education as “a venture into the unknown” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 272) such that “the self is pushed to leap beyond the known and the safe toward the broader territory of the uncertain … sinking its roots in imagination and courage” and risking the unknown (D’Agnese, 2018, p. 317). To refuse courage, risk, and uncertainty in education is rather engaging in what Paulo Freire (1970/2005) calls “banking education”—the notion that teaching and learning consists solely of passing a predefined quantity of knowledge from one person or generation to the next. And yet, “this is what a neo-liberal ‘learning discourse’ attempts to eclipse,” D’Agnese (2018) suggests, offering that “what teachers, researchers, educators and even policy-makers” must instead seek is the “courage and the perseverance to imagine and enact” (p. 327). Over and over throughout our interactions, Marc, Charlie, and Greg resisted the pull of these banking models—predetermined ideas of what music education should look and sound like—in favor of courageously risking the unknown in their classrooms.

In Marc’s stories, I witnessed the courage of a teacher who was willing to “venture into the unknown” territory of teaching students who sang and played a variety of instruments according to the requirements of the present musical situation. I perceived the humility through which Marc recounted the ways his teaching has changed over the years—his courage in letting go of the belief that reading standard music notation is integral to musical experience and learning to program more relevant repertoire for his students and audiences instead of the music he thought would make him “look good” from an ivory tower perspective. As an observer of Marc’s classes I had the privilege of witnessing Marc’s courage to “teach who he is” (Palmer, 2017) by allowing a meaningful aspect of his own musical becoming—“Hey come over here, let’s play together!”—to guide his pedagogy.

In Charlie's stories, I witnessed the struggle of a White teacher striving to understand the cultural heritage of his Native American students: a man willing to risk naming and reckoning with his privilege—even if partial, incomplete, or unfinished—a teacher learning how to care for his students more deeply, an educator committed to the idea that music curriculum ought to reflect the students who inhabit it. I also witnessed the stories of a teacher willing to risk the privilege of being perceived as the "sole authority" over his classroom by seeking out the counsel of culture bearers Akát, Kalin, and Mother Song; I perceived the excitement Charlie recounted as he witnessed his Native American students' enthusiastic reception of Mother Song in his classroom while also struggling to help his White students appreciate the cultural significance of the musical space.

In Greg's stories, I witnessed a bit of the inner dialogue of teacher courageous enough to say, "I don't know," and "I haven't solved that piece of the puzzle yet, " and a teacher willing to admit that he has come to an impasse in his thinking (i.e., the rigor/engagement question). I learned about Greg's courageous decision to risk leaving a stable performing career in search of deeper ways to connect with people through music—a desire that led him to more schooling, a move across the country, and a brand new vocation. I witnessed Greg's commitment to "seeing school big" (Greene's words): to devote care and individual attention to each of his students like the blues guitar player when they came in for lessons. I also witnessed Greg's courage to view his students as "a real mix of individuals;" his resistance to thinking of them in terms of categories, statistics, and grouped entities; his refusal of "artificial separations" and "the decontextualizations that falsify so much" (Greene, 1995, p. 11).

As a society, we are all too familiar with a very specific narrative of "teacherly courage": films such as *Dead Poets Society*, *School of Rock*, and *Stand and Deliver* portray teachers who

take a number of risks in their classrooms in an effort to enact varying degrees of "liberation" for their students and themselves. Yet woven throughout many of these cinematic portrayals of heroic and courageous teaching acts is the common thread of *individual* teachers singlehandedly standing up to the oppressive structures around them (Stengel, 2018): Jack Black vs. the reign of Western Classical music education; Robin Williams vs. Ivy League snobbery and tradition; Jaime Escalante vs. systemic inequities in educating of students of color. These teachers are revered for their heroic courage, determination, and resistance and their students are seen as benefiting from their teachers' acts to various degrees. And yet rarely are the perpetuators of the oppressive power structures these teachers struggle against held accountable in these films; rarer yet, Stengel (2018) argues, do the teachers in these films work among *courageous others* toward dismantling and reconstructing these systems of power.

One of the dangers in telling heroic teacher stories is that they reinforce the oppressive structures that hold for students and teachers captive. Stories that focus solely on an individual teacher's courage often inspire respect and awe in viewers toward the teacher; we walk away from these films thinking, "Wow, it sure is good we have teachers like Jack Black and Robin Williams who have the grit and determination to help these struggling, inner city kids." And while these stories might inspire empathy and compassion in viewers, they might also lead us to the conclusion that the problems students face are "teacher problems" rather than "social problems," as if to say, "If we just recruit enough caring and dedicated teachers like Jaime Escalante to the profession, things will get better." The danger in these courageous teacher narratives is that they fail to hold people in positions of power—administrators, school board members, superintendents, politicians, the voting public—accountable for their roles in perpetuating the oppressive structures in which struggling students (and teachers) find

themselves. In glorifying stories of heroic teacher narratives, we inadvertently codify teachers' struggles as integral aspects of what it means to be a teacher and ensure their continued oppression.

I could have cast Charlie, for example, as a different character in Chapter V by writing a script that pointed more strongly toward themes of the hero who prevails against all odds. I could have amped up the drama by elongating my descriptions of his exhaustion, re-written the scenes where Charlie expressed uncertainty and doubt (the hero must be resolute in his convictions), and ended the chapter by having Charlie take a bow to applauding choruses of, "It sure is good to have music teachers like Charlie around!" When I told you stories about the teaching conditions under which Charlie works—his hasty protein shake between classes, a lack of bathroom breaks, the many different classes he teaches every day—I hoped you would feel a sense of concern for Charlie's physical, mental, and emotional health. When I told you about the way Charlie's principal responded to his request for changes in his schedule—"There's nothing we can do about it"—I hoped some part of you would be incensed at her lack of concern for Charlie's well being. I hoped you would feel the regret that *I* felt in hearing Charlie say he wasn't sure if he could see himself teaching music for the rest of his career—that the prospect of burnout was close on Charlie's horizon. But I also hoped that after reading the stories I told you about the many ways Charlie is earnestly striving to meet the needs of his students through equitable and responsive music teaching practices, that you might wonder how we might better support and sustain teachers like Charlie in the teaching profession at large. And I hoped you would feel a sense of urgency around a need to revise and rebuild the structures in education that are enforcing Charlie's (and his students') oppression. To be clear, I think Charlie is to be admired for the courageous teaching he is doing. I have much respect for his resistance to censorship and

commitment to equity as a music teacher, which is part of why I told you about these aspects of his becoming in the first place. But these stories of courage are not finished. They do not end with Charlie, but instead point to us: how will the stories of Charlie's working conditions as a public school teacher move *you and I* into action? (Silin 1998).

Stengel (2018) reminds us that while practicing *resistance* toward oppressive systems is an integral aspect of courageous teaching, as Charlie demonstrates toward the censorship of specific musical traditions at his school, we must also work to *reconstruct* "spaces and systems where all can flourish" (pp. 231-232). In Chapter IV, I told you stories of Marc's disillusion with the musical experiences presented to him as a vocalist and undergraduate music education major—"Am I going to have to do *this music* for the next 25 or 30 years?" Marc had asked himself. As a form of resistance, Marc left school for a year (and, ironically, found enough work directing church choirs to make ends meet). Did Marc have to exhibit a substantial amount of determination and perseverance in finishing the degree, and then to continue substitute-teaching, and working at schools for 15 years that weren't "the right fit?" A resounding "yes" to each of those acts and to the courage Marc had to muster in his music teacher becoming. But again, I did not tell you about these aspects of Marc's teaching life so that you would read them and say, "Wow, look at everything this teacher courageously endured!" What if Marc had left music education altogether? My own view is that we, as a profession, would have lost a dynamic and visionary music teacher who continually strives to restructure his curriculum and pedagogy toward more relevant music experiences for his students.

Much of what fascinates me about Marc is the ways he has reconstructed a music program (from "band" and "choir" to "emerging ensembles") and teaching identity (from "choir director" to "music teacher") in ways that better suit his own musical background and

personhood—and, he hopes, those of his students. But again, this story does not end with Marc: What do Marc's stories of resistance and reconstruction mean for *me* as I enter a post-secondary institution (i.e., "the Ivory Tower") in the capacity of a music education faculty member? How do *I* teach in a way that allows undergraduates like Marc to feel included and musically engaged—to know that their own musical backgrounds, traditions, and experiences matter? How do I prepare future music teachers to teach toward the inclusion of a variety of musical practices and processes in their classrooms that engage the diverse students who set foot in *their* classrooms? How do I resist indoctrinating undergraduate music education majors into a single, supreme tradition of music making, and how might Marc's stories impact the ways *I* advocate for change within a university music education department? These stories—like Marc's—all take place within intricate systems—systems which must be continually re-evaluated, taken apart, and put back together again into forms that better support work around equity, justice, and freedom.

Drawing upon an Aristotelian concept of courage as a "good" practiced in "right" contexts and a Deweyan acknowledgement of responsibility to individual and social spheres, Stengel (2018) suggests that a more socially constructive form of courage emerges through the *embeddedness* of teachers, students, administrators, and community members in context: "[Courage] is not a trait that preexists action in the "heart" of some individuals and not others, but rather "the result of a lifeworld structured to make constructive response both necessary and possible" (p. 223). Thus, courageous reconstruction of complex educational institutions can only be enacted by people in relationship with one another: courageous teachers, then, are not a collection of "individuals single-mindedly standing up for principle in an isolated moment" but rather, "teaching and learning communities *living themselves* into being with members of those communities holding space for one another" (p. 232). I told you stories of Greg's steel drum

ensembles and the participatory enthusiasm they sparked because I think he was able to foster a form of music making that is distinctly communal—a voluntary involvement in music enacted by both children and adults in Greg's community. What began as a group of four people who enjoyed drumming—Greg, his son, and two friends—eventually "lived itself" into the form of a 60-person band and four steel drum ensembles. And although their work together didn't require the deconstruction of an existing structure, I think the unique musical culture they created together as a community is courageously community-oriented. I admire the socially-embedded view Greg holds of music education and his continual efforts at re-shaping his school ensembles in ways he imagines will better serve his community: the marching band, steel drum band, Mardi Gras band, and chamber ensembles that perform in a variety of venues across the community. I think he has tapped into something uniquely meaningful with these community steel drum groups.

Authorly Courage

As for my part in this project, my own courage has come in the form of continually narrating my own becoming within the words of these pages. When I began my doctoral work nearly four years ago, I had not envisioned there would be so much of *myself* in the final rendering of this document. But then, how could I *not* be a central figure in this study? How could I *not* be intimately embedded in each and every word of this dissertation, especially given that, in the words of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, *"I wrote the damn thing!"* What I continue to realize throughout this process is the extent to which "who we are," is deeply enmeshed in our research and writing, regardless of whether or not we choose to acknowledge it. "You really should celebrate your embeddedness," Kathleen Reilly remembers Maxine saying during one of their weekly writing sessions (Ernst et al., 1998, p. 39). Reilly reflects on the

discomfort she experienced in being given this advice—a feeling I also know well. And yet, Greene reminds me: "We have to know about *our* lives, clarify *our* situations if we are to understand the world from our shared standpoints" (1995, p. 21). How can I think I know or understand anything about someone else's lived experiences if I do not also examine the ways *mine* impacts the way I view theirs? Perhaps "celebrating embeddedness" then is not so much the disclosure of or apology for a researcher's limited perspective, but rather a way of saying, *I respect the uniqueness of your consciousness and lived experience enough to resist defining, categorizing, and generalizing you into existence. I cherish the human-to-human-ness of our conversations; I hold dearly the collective consciousness toward which we have striven together*.

In reflecting on his scholarly transition from positivism to autoethnography, Art Bochner acknowledges, "The work I published was statistically significant," and asks, "But was it *humanly* significant?" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 33). Although I might not have used these words four years ago, I think "human significance" is at the heart of what I am searching for as a researcher and writer; it is likely also what led me to Maxine. Writers who strive for human significance, Bochner and Ellis (2016) suggest, "Focus attention on people" such that "our challenge is to artfully arrange life in ways that enable readers to enter dialogue with our lives as well as with their understanding of their own" (p. 79). I have recently developed a preference for writing in the 1st person voice, and even the 2nd person voice as a way of acknowledging my own human-ness in hope of connecting with the human-ness of those who read my work—I now value comments like, "this paper was interesting and easy to read" most of all. I am coming to see stories as a way of knowing and communicating in research; and I am particularly grateful to indigenous authors like Thomas King for teaching about the power of stories as such. The words

in these pages flow more freely from the fingers on my keyboard when I give myself permission to "just write" now and revise later.

Writing with a more personal voice—*my* voice—has felt both liberating and risky. I realize that when I write in this style, I chance being regarded by some as "unacademic," unscholarly," or perhaps even as failing to generate what might more commonly be understood as "research." Maxine understood this kind of criticism all too well: "I was demeaned in my early days of college teaching by being told I was too 'literary' to do philosophy," Greene recounts, supposing this to mean that she was "ill equipped to do the sort of detached and rigorous analysis of language games and arguments that for a long time dominated the academic world" (1995, p. 113). And yet I think it is Greene's subjective humanity— "I could not separate my feeling, imagining, wondering consciousness from the cognitive work"—that is exactly what makes her writing provocative and humanly compelling (p. 113). And so if Maxine Greene can be courageous enough to light the passageway to more pluralistic, personal, human-centered work—to be a beacon of light in the darkness of the "detached"—will endeavor to take courage and follow her lead.

"I have taken cues from Maxine," Reilly reflects on her writing process, "I have learned to think more fluidly than ever, to wallow in my data, to pile up questions until I feel stuffed, to trust my instincts, to value the entire process" (Ernst et al., 1998, p. 40). Through Maxine, I too am learning that writing and thinking go hand in hand. Although I have always been a firm believer in developing and working from a detailed outline, for example, the best writing I have done in this document has been more or less "inspired by" my outlines, rather than scripted from them. Sometimes I write in fragments, sometimes in whole paragraphs and pages. Sometimes I start in the middle of a project, other times at the end or beginning. I am finding that when I let

myself think and write in tandem, I often end up drawing upon different sources, ideas, or experiences from what I had originally planned. Sometimes I need to find new texts to draw upon because the questions I'm asking are changing: I realize that I need to (allow myself to) meander down the "rabbit holes" of youtube videos, New York Times articles, poems, references to other references and to find the thing I didn't know I needed to know. It has taken courage for me to "trust the process" of exploration in my writing—to risk the flow of sand which passes steadily through the hourglass that marks due dates and deadlines as I search for inspiration. And rather than writing to "prove," I have begun to write in search of clarity—clarity of thought, feeling, and experience.

I extend Stengel's (2018) appeal for narratives of courageous communities of teachers who resist *and* reconstruct to my own scholarly work: how might I, as a teacher and writer, resist research traditions of human objectification, over-generalization, and colonialism? How might I instead reassemble my own scholarship to reflect more humane, ethnographic practices that honor the uniquely perceived, lived experiences of those with whom I interact? I have attempted this reconstructive work throughout my dissertation in conversation with a community of scholars who have already devoted whole careers toward creating openings in research methodologies and philosophies: I have striven to remain "sensitively open" to phenomenological meaning throughout my research (Dahlberg et al., 2008); to orient myself toward bearing witness to the uniqueness of educational spaces (Hansen, 2017); to evoke rich, (auto)ethnographic portraits of music teacher becomings (Bochner & Ellis, 2016); to "story" my research, as indigenous peoples have practiced long before I became aware (King, 2005); to search for philosophical wisdom embedded within these stories (Okri, 2005). And of course, I have sought to emulate the philosophical ethos of Maxine Greene, who wrote the stories of her

own lived experience alongside those from literature, music, art, and education—Maxine Greene, who is teaching me how to "do" and *live* a more human-oriented kind of philosophy

Throughout the stories I have told in this dissertation, I have striven to construct a version of research that is both engaging and rigorous (to use Greg's words), intimately personal yet also (what I hope will be) resonant and relatable to a larger audience invested in music education. I have sought to bridle my presence in telling the stories of Greg, Marc, and Charlie—navigating the places where I ought to listen and describe, deciding where it might also be appropriate to speak and interpret (Dahlberg et al. 2008). I have attempted to "do" philosophy as Maxine did: to adopt a philosophical orientation concerned with "search[ing] for a social vision of a more human, more fully pluralist, more just, and more joyful community" (1995, p. 61). And throughout this work, Maxine Greene reminds me that the principles of equity, equality, and freedom must remain at the center of my becoming, reaching, imagining, resisting, constructing, and reconstructing. She reminds me that I must choose these principles of my own accord *and* alongside others: "to call, to say, to sing, and—using [our] imaginations, tapping [our] *courage*—to transform" (Greene, 1995, p. 198). Socially imaginative teaching and research depends on these private and public acts of courage.

Epilogue

In his collection of essays, *The truth about stories: A native narrative*, Thomas King (2005) concludes each of his chapters by invoking the agency of his reader as an active participant: "Take the story of [this character] or [that one], for instance," King implores. "It's yours. Do with it what you will" (p. 29). King imagines a variety of uses to which his reader might apply the story: "Tell it to your children. Turn it into a play" (p. 151). Or in another case, "Cry over it. Get angry" (p. 119). Another: "Make it the topic of a discussion group at a scholarly conference. Put it on the Web" (p. 60). Perhaps, as Okri and Greene would suggest, the story has startled the complacency of King's reader in some way or caused the reader to re-imagine an aspect of their own reality from the vantage of someone else; perhaps the story has even moved the reader into some kind of action or revision of their daily interactions with others. King also allows that his reader might simply "forget it" (p. 151). His readers are allowed all manner of autonomous responses to his stories but one, captured in the final sentences in each of King's essays: "But don't say in years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You have heard it now" (p. 151). King's closing words remind us that "once a story is told, it cannot be called back" (p. 10) and that "[Stories] are living things, and their real life begins when they start to live in you." (Okri, 2014, p. 35).

Dear Reader, at this point I have only gratitude left to express to you for your active participation in these stories of becoming that I have told—stories of public and private acts of courage; stories of teachers who are striving toward equity, justice, and freedom in their music teaching. I would like to leave you in a similar fashion to King, wondering with Okri if just one of these stories might continue to live in you, hoping with Maxine that one of them might move

you to tap *your* own stories, *your* experiences in finding projects by which to create *your* identities (Greene, 1995, p. 113):

> Take the stories of Marc's, Charlies, Greg's, and my becomings; they are yours. Do with them what you will.
>
> > Tell them to your administrator.
> > Listen to Jimi Hendrix's version of the Star-Spangled Banner again.
> > Find a Mother Song in your own community.
> > Re-visit an interesting question with a colleague.
> > Start an emerging ensemble.
> >
> > Or forget them.
>
> But don't say in years to come that you would have lived your life differently—that you would have been a different music teacher—if only you had heard these stories. You have heard them now.

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